United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

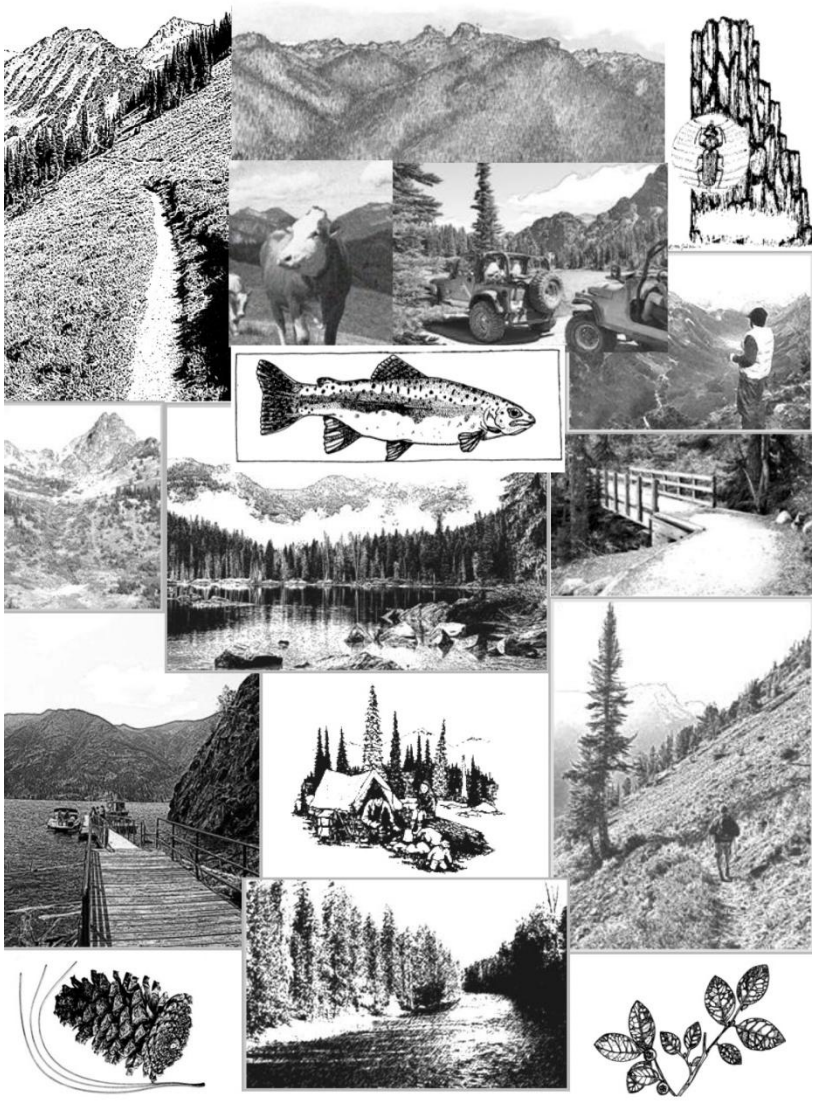
Pacific Northwest Region

Proposed Action

for Forest Plan Revision

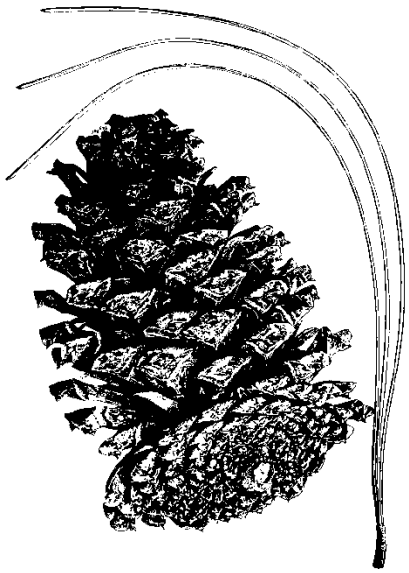
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

June, 2011



PROPOSED ACTION FOR FOREST PLAN REVISION
OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST

Contents



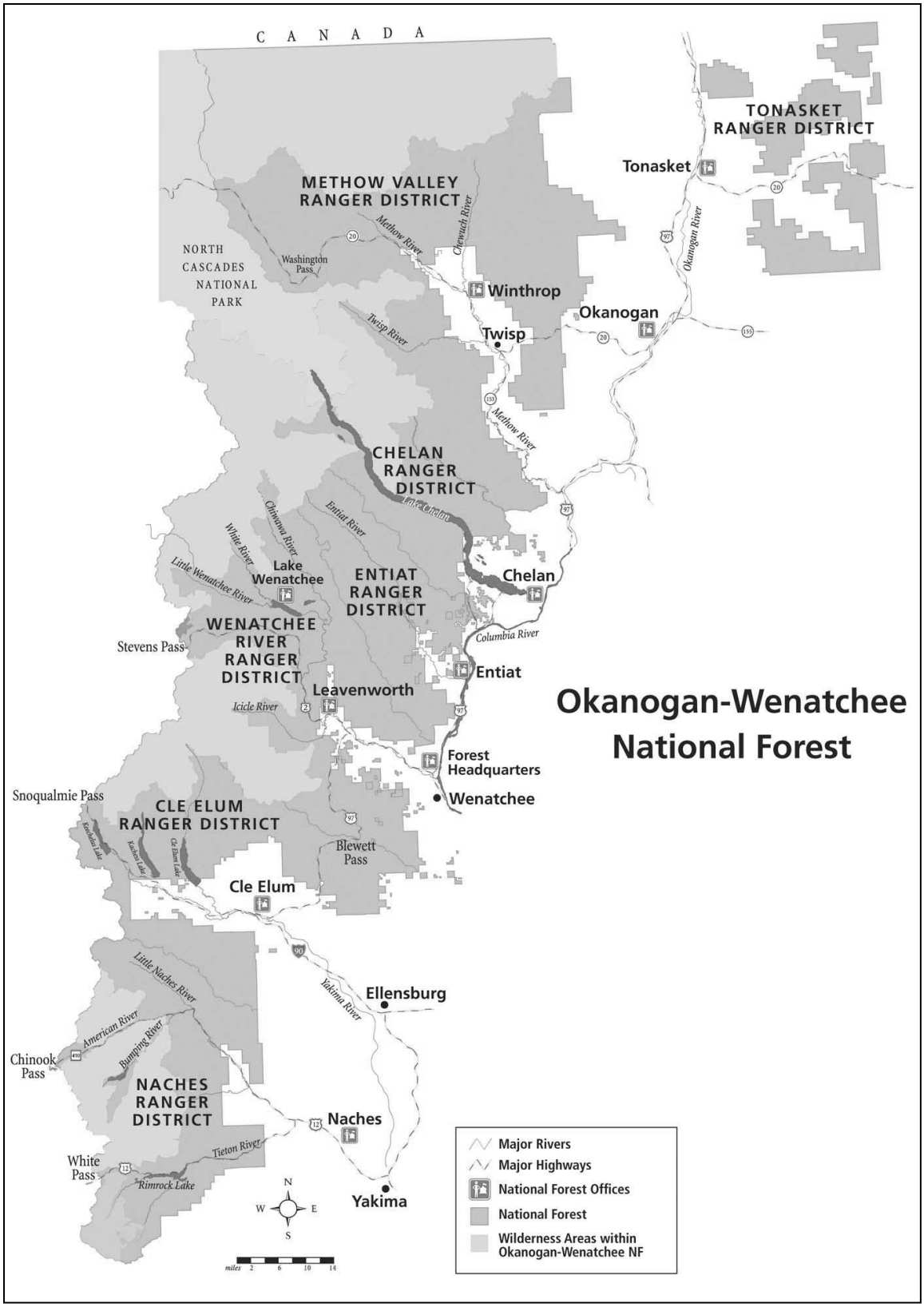


Figure 1. Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest vicinity map

Introduction and Background

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is revising their land management plans (current forest plans). This document describes the proposed action. In other words, this document includes our proposal for changes to the current forest plans.

The public is invited to participate in developing alternatives by commenting on the proposed actions in this document. Comments received on this proposed action will form the basis for alternatives to be included in a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The DEIS will, 1) display and compare alternative ways of managing national forest lands; and 2) outline the physical, biological, social and economic effects of each alternative.

You will find information about how and when to submit comments on our proposal on the last pages of this document. Information on the background history of the plan revision process and future steps are included.

To help set the context for the changes we propose, this section contains information about the changes since the 1980s era forest plans, current conditions on the Forest, and public expectations for future management of the Forest.

How This Document Is Arranged

The first section of this document includes a summary of comments from the public, an overview of challenges to managing our national forest, and a description of new information the Forest Service must consider in the plan revision process.

The proposed actions begin on page 22. Here is where your comments would be most valuable in helping the Forest Service further develop the revised forest plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Sections of the Proposed Action

Summary of Public Comments - The plan revision team has considered these comments in the analysis of the current forest plan and in developing proposed revisions.

New Information - This section summarizes the types of information the team is considering in the plan revision process.

Overview of Management Challenges - The plan revision team identified challenges to managing the national forest. Challenges such as climate change and budget must be considered when developing plan components for the plan revision.

The Proposed Actions - The planning team considered all of the above information that includes the concerns heard from the public, management challenges, and new information and put together a proposal for revising the current forest plan. This proposal emphasizes those areas you indicated needed change and those items we found needed updating after looking at other sources.

The proposed action section is arranged into these parts:

Proposed actions for landscape character and dynamics – this is where you will find the proposed actions for resources including plant habitats, vegetative systems, disturbance from insects, disease and fire, old forests, biological legacies, key watersheds, aquatic and riparian habitats, and wildlife habitats.

Proposed actions for social systems – this is where you will find the proposed actions for topics including forest access, livestock grazing, recreation, renewable forest products, and scenery.

Proposed actions for management areas – this section is where you will find more information about the proposed management areas, including riparian management areas, administrative sites, motorized and non-motorized backcountry areas, active restoration areas, and special areas such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, special interest areas, scenic byways and nationally designated trails.

Monitoring – this section provides an overview of the proposed monitoring.

NATURE OF THE DECISION MADE BY A FOREST PLAN

Forest plans provide broad guidance for stewardship of a Forest for approximately 15 years. Plans are strategic in nature, making general decisions that are often referred to as programmatic decisions. Types of decisions not made by forest plans include site-specific decisions, such as the location and length of a trail. Individual decisions are made for each project and those decisions apply only to those sites where the project or action will take place.

Historically, many eastern Washington communities developed strong natural resource based economies in the mining, logging, agricultural, and grazing industries. Over time, other values became increasingly important such as protecting water quality and quantity, protecting scenery, providing recreational settings that support tourism, and providing for functioning and intact ecosystems. The forest plan of today balances these public values and expectations. When making decisions in the revised plan, we will examine the economic and social impacts to local counties, at a broader regional level, and the ecological and biological impacts.

FOREST PLAN REVISION

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires all Forests to develop plans that direct resource management activities. These plans must be revised when conditions have changed significantly, or on a 10 to 15 year cycle.

The existing plans for the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests were completed in 1989 and 1990 respectively, and have been amended several times. Revised Forest Service policies, congressional direction, court decisions, new or updated conservation agreements and recovery plans, and new scientific findings have all highlighted that current plans are outdated and not very responsive to change. The background information in the proposed action section gives more information on these changes. To respond to the outdated nature of the current plans, the Forest is currently revising their forest plans The Okanogan and Wenatchee are now administratively combined. There will be a single revised plan for this Forest.

The revised forest plan will incorporate changes in the natural environment, new scientific understandings and social trends, and will satisfy regulatory requirements.

Six primary decisions are made in forest plans:

1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives (as required by 36 CFR 219.11[b])
2. Forest-wide management requirements (as required by 36 CFR 219.27)
3. Management area direction (36 CFR 219.11[c])
4. Lands suited and not suited for timber management (36 CFR 219.14, 219.16, 219.21)
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11[d])
6. Recommendations to Congress (if any) (36 CFR 219.17)

Public comments received and the results of annual monitoring and evaluation have helped us determine the need to make some changes to the primary decisions made in the current forest plans. The revised plan should be a more effective, reliable, and adaptive tool for managing forest resources.

In general, many decisions made in the current forest plans are still valid and will be carried into the revised forest plan. Current plans often paraphrased existing law, regulation, and directives. As a federal land management agency, the Forest Service must follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The same situation applies to executive orders and to agency policy, as expressed in the Forest Service directives. This direction does not need to be restated in the revised forest plan and will not be found in the following proposed action.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOREST PLAN REVISION

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE PUBLIC

Following is a summary of comments from the public since 2003 when the Forest Plan Revision Interdisciplinary Team (planning team) began receiving input regarding changes to the current Okanogan and Wenatchee forest plans.

In the early stages of the plan revision process, the planning team visited communities to engage the public in discussions about which parts of the plan needed changing and which topics to concentrate on in the revision.

To begin discussions, the team identified areas of the plan that needed to be revised from the current forest plans. The public then commented on these areas of discussion and presented additional topics to consider. Following are the themes and comments from those meetings. Since those original discussions, the planning team has confirmed that these continue to be areas of concern in the current forest plans and therefore have a need for revision.

The following public comments are organized by resource or areas of the current forest plan that are being considered for revision.

1. **VEGETATIVE SYSTEMS**
    a. The public has indicated that they view the realm of vegetation management as having more facets than merely providing outputs of commodities.

    b. Most comments received were in the areas of timber supply and the matter of properties at risk from wildland fire. The concern for protection of structures and adjacent forests in the wildland urban interface surfaced at public meetings. The public encouraged the Forest Service to accelerate management in interface areas.

    c. Some concern was expressed about the definition of "old growth" and how location and amount of old growth was determined. Members of the public indicated that old growth should be recognized as an "ecosystem condition" and not simply as large trees. Current management direction for old growth does not address forest health issues, provide for the sustainability of wildlife habitats in dry forest types, or address landscape dynamics and desired conditions.

d. Others commented about the importance of large trees, indicating that the differences between old growth and old and large trees is important and likely controversial.

2. PLANT HABITATS

a. Invasive Weeds **-** Comments on noxious weeds emphasized the need to accelerate control measures. This sentiment was echoed in written comments and comments expressed at public meetings.

b. Threatened and Endangered Plants - Comments encouraged continued protection of threatened and endangered plants. Comments received addressed maintenance and enhancement of rare plant populations on the Forests. Concern was expressed for the impacts that general Forest Service management activities, specifically recreation and grazing, would have on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, native plants, and biodiversity. Further concerns focused on the impacts of invasive plant species on rare plant populations. Comments about invasive plant species also contained some concern for herbicide effects on non-target plants. Prevention was emphasized as a component of an integrated weed management program.

3. WILDLIFE HABITATS

a. There was a diversity of comments about the level of emphasis that should be given to wildlife conservation and the maintenance of habitats. The comments ranged from a desire to provide a high level of emphasis to a desire to balance the needs of people and wildlife.

b. The potential for conflict between access to the national forest and the need to provide secure and well-connected habitats for wildlife species was expressed, as well as the importance of using the best science to guide conservation efforts.

4. THREATENED AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

a. The topic of recovery of grizzly bear populations elicited comments from diverse positions, ranging from those who favor to those who oppose efforts to recover bears. A common concern is how to balance human needs to access the Forest with the needs of the grizzly bear for secure habitats. Using good science to guide grizzly recovery efforts is important.

b. Some people expressed concerns over conflicts between trying to recover grizzly bears and caribou in the same area.

c. Some comments expressed concern about the potential conflicts between Canada lynx conservation and access for recreation. Members of the public have shown interest in how timber harvest can be used to manage habitat for lynx. The need to use good science to guide lynx conservation efforts was identified.

d. Concern about pursuing wolf recovery was expressed. The potential for conflict between access to the Forest and the need to provide secure habitat for federally listed species was identified. The importance of using the best available science to guide conservation efforts was identified.

e. There was concern raised about the ability to sustain late-successional habitats within dry forests for species such as the northern spotted owl. Members of the public have expressed concerns over the need to implement restoration treatments in dry forests while also retaining habitat for old-forest associated wildlife species.

5. ACCESS SYSTEM

a. Access to the national forest is one of the more controversial issues in forest planning. Comments indicate there appears to be an increase in conflicting values about motorized versus non-motorized recreation.

b. Members of the public are concerned about the new travel management policy (finalized November 2005), how it will affect their access opportunities and mode of transportation, the federal threatened and endangered species listing, and access restrictions that protect habitat.

c. Members of the public have expressed discontent with Forest management, commenting that the Forest does not supply enough recreation access to support the demand for recreation opportunities. They feel that road and trail maintenance has been reduced, making access more difficult.

d. The management of roads was important to many who provided comments when the forest plans were first developed. Many recent comments expressed the desire for improved maintenance on all roads. Most comments, however, reflected diverse opinions about whether existing roads should be kept open and whether new roads should be constructed. Some of those who commented felt that roads should be kept open for access to fires, and that loops to provide emergency exits should be developed by connecting roads. Others believed that roads increase the risk of human-caused fires by providing access to more areas.

e. Many felt the road system is oversized and that more miles of roads should be closed or decommissioned for the protection of wildlife and other resources. Others thought that roads do not cause loss of wildlife habitat or other resource damage, and that more roads are needed to accommodate an increased number of users, and provide a higher level of access to the Forest.

f. Many comments pointed out that an analysis of all roads (including unauthorized and user-built roads that are not assessed in the current roads analyses) should be

completed to determine which roads should remain open and which should be closed or decommissioned. (Unauthorized roads are defined as roads on National Forest System lands that are not managed as part of the Forest transportation system, such as unplanned roads, abandoned travel-ways, or roads that were not decommissioned upon the termination of a permit or other authorization [FSM 7700, 36 CFR 212.1]).

g. The importance of economic diversity in communities was emphasized. This diversity depends on Forest access and the ability to market access through activities and events, such as community snowmobiling and mountain biking events.

6. LIVESTOCK GRAZING

a. Range permittees have expressed concern that applying stubble height standards uniformly across an allotment may unnecessarily restrict grazing operations.

b. Some public comments expressed concern for grazing impacts on rare plant resources and their habitats.

c. Some expressed concerns about impacts of grazing on aquatic and riparian habitats.

7. RECREATION

a. The public appears to be concerned about "unmanaged recreation", commenting that resource damage is occurring due to a lack of administrative management or presence. The resource damage referred to includes vegetation destruction, soil compaction and disturbance from vehicle parking, human waste, and garbage littering the ground.

b. Some user groups have expressed interest in seeing more opportunities to enjoy their activity of choice such as providing more settings for ATV users, more trails designed for mountain bike use, and more non-motorized areas for winter use. Local residents would like to see more settings developed for day use proximate to communities both to benefit residents and tourism.

c. Some user groups expressed a concern that they would lose access for snowmobiling, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

8. RENEWABLE FOREST PRODUCTS

a. The public has expressed concerns and ideas about timber supply. Some comments emphasized the need to harvest timber to maintain local economies. Others saw the Forest supplying other outputs, such as recreation, that support local economies as timber outputs have in the past.

b. The public expressed concerns about harvesting areas burned by wildfire. Some felt harvest was necessary to capture the economic value of the trees and speed

c. recovery, while others saw harvest as unnecessary where natural processes will bring about recovery.

d. Residents would like access to a supply of firewood.

9. SCENERY

a. People have commented that they would like to see more salvage logging in scenic areas to better sustain the forest and prevent uncharacteristic fire. They have also expressed a desire for the Forest Service to give more consideration to scenery when harvest activities are conducted within sight of communities. Views from the air have become an increasing concern by the public, as well as background views.

b. A portion of the public would prefer to see no salvage logging on the Forest.

10. MANAGEMENT AREAS

a. Members of the public agree that clarifying the locations and descriptions of the current management areas (MA) would be helpful. However, the public expressed concern over using the same MA classifications on all three Forests in the planning area (Colville, Okanogan and Wenatchee). Many remarked that if a consistent MA classification, with fewer MAs, was applied to the three Forests, the unique resource conditions of some areas would not be recognized.

11. WILD AND SCENIC RIVER RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Some people commented on retaining the current wild and scenic river recommendations, and requested further analysis of additional rivers.

12. WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Part of the forest plan revision process is to identify which portions of the roadless inventory should be recommended for wilderness designation. Numerous comments on the subject of roadless areas indicate a wide-ranging mix of sentiments, from desiring commodity use and motorized use in inventoried roadless areas to making inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) designated wilderness.

b. Some people want the roadless areas to stay as they are and not be developed or designated as wilderness because they like the diversity of uses available in a semi-primitive to primitive environment. In terms of recreation, they would like to use mountain bikes, which are restricted from wilderness, and not be restricted to a party size as they are in designated wilderness areas. Some people wish to use motorized tools, which are prohibited in wilderness.

c. Recreationists that use motorized transportation have expressed a desire for the primitive quality of the IRAs where they can snowmobile or use their motorcycles in a mostly unmodified landscape that offers challenges.

d. People favoring wilderness recommendations cite designation as the only permanent form of protection from activities such as road building and mining. They want to protect ecosystem values and unique settings, provide for primitive forms of recreation, and enhance tourism economies.

e. Some comments ask for more land to be identified as IRAs and suggest that we obliterate roads so the land will meet the criteria of a roadless area.

f. Some want to obliterate roads that intrude into the IRAs because they dissect the roadless area, or cause a disconnection between two roadless areas. Others are asking for a re-inventory, claiming that previous inventories were incomplete or inadequate.

g. There have been comments on the inaccuracies of the original mapping.

13. THE NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN (NWFP) AND EASTSIDE SCREENS, PACFISH, AND INLAND NATIVE FISH STRATEGY (INFISH) INTERIM GUIDANCE

a. Public comments cover a wide range on the subject of Eastside Screens. Some favor extending the screens or introducing more restrictive standards and guidelines. Others favor minimizing the level of restriction to timber harvest activities.

b. Public comments suggested that PACFISH and INFISH riparian protections should be incorporated into the revised forest plan.

NWFP - Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994)

Eastside Screens - Decision Notice for the Continuation of Interim Management Direction Establishing Riparian, Ecosystem and Wildlife Standards for Timber Sales (May 20, 1994)

PACFish - Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and portions of California (PACFISH, USDA and USDI 1995)

INFish - Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH, USDA Forest Service 1994c and 1995)

NEW INFORMATION

In addition to gathering information from the public, the planning team reviewed other new information. These included new science, completed and on-going research, results from monitoring and evaluation of past projects and management, decisions from past forest plan and project level appeal issues, lawsuit issues and decisions, climate change, changed conditions of the land, and forest service policy on ecosystem management at a landscape scale.

Other new information was provided by watershed and forest health assessments and forest-scale roads analysis. Key elements were reviewed from "The Interior Columbia Basin Strategy: A strategy for applying the knowledge gained by the interior Columbia basin ecosystem management project to the revision of forest and resource management plans and project implementation (the Strategy, 2000). The Strategy takes into consideration concerns raised by the public throughout the interior Columbia basin planning process and the findings of the interior Columbia basin Science Assessment. Key elements identified in the Strategy include looking at the contribution of the Forest to:

- Sustaining, and where necessary and practical, and within available funding, restoring the health of forests, rangeland, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems.
- Providing a predictable, sustained flow of economic benefits within the capability of the ecosystems.
- Providing diverse recreational and educational opportunities within the capability of the ecosystems.
- Contributing to the recovery and de-listing of threatened and endangered species and 303(d) listed waters.
- Managing natural resources consistent with treaty and trust responsibilities to American Indian Tribes.

How the Forest is responding to these public concerns and new information is found in the proposed action section of this document. In that section, we provide more detailed information on revised Forest Service policies, congressional direction, court decisions, new or updated conservation agreements and recovery plans, and new scientific findings; changes in the natural environment and social trends, and monitoring results that highlight how our current plans are outdated.

OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES TO MANAGING OUR NATIONAL FOREST

Also considered are the current challenges to managing the national forest. The following challenges were identified as the most critical to sustaining resources on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Encompassing about 4 million acres, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest accounts for about 9.4 percent of the total land area in Washington State. These lands provide numerous critical social, ecological, and economic benefits to the state.

The key to maintaining our Forest for public benefits lies in the protection of clean water sources, and aquatic and terrestrial habitat for species of fish, plants, and wildlife; providing quiet, natural places for personal renewal; emphasizing planning and restoration of forest ecosystems to make them more resilient to changing climates; preservation of heritage resources; providing recreation access, facilities, and services; providing renewable and non-renewable forest products; and providing roads, services, and accommodations to support local economies.

Achieving long-term benefits depends on our ability to recognize and anticipate threats to resilience and effectively resolve them through strategic, thoughtful resource management. Major challenges facing Forest managers include population growth, urbanization, appropriate recreational use, access, climate change, drought, disease, tree mortality, fire, invasive non-native species, and protection of natural resources. Achieving ecological, social, and economic sustainability may be limited by the capability of the plan area as well as by agency authorities.

- **CLIMATE CHANGE**
  Projected climate changes, based on current knowledge, information and data presents significant challenges in predicting trajectories. The current state of knowledge and modeling results in a high level of uncertainty in accurately predicting localized climate change influences and results. Nor do we have the knowledge on how systems and species could potentially react to these changes. This high degree of uncertainty suggests viewing desired conditions as a 'working hypothesis' based on the best available information at this time and subject to constant review as a result of monitoring at scales that can detect relevant changes. Another significant part of the challenge presented by climate change is in creating sustainable landscapes for fish, plant and wildlife species recovery. Following are a few climate change factors to consider.

  - Climate is already a significant stressor in the Columbia Basin and eastern Cascade Range and if predictions are correct, the amount of wildfire could double by the 2040s. This will be particularly true in the central Cascade Range.

  - Possible consequences of global climate change include: 1) changes in growing seasons and arable areas, 2) changes in species composition and distribution, 3) changes in growth rates, 4) potential extinction or extirpation of species, 5) increased carbon turnover at higher latitudes and elevation, 6) increased forest fires, 7) changes in forest health, and, 8) changes in hydrologic patterns and functions.

- Rapid climate changes will result in plants and systems whose response will not be able to keep up with or adjust to the changes. Vegetation communities as we know them will change. Exotic and invasive species are likely to be more prevalent as new niches open up because native vegetation cannot keep up with climate changes. Processes, interactions, and functions within vegetation communities will change.

- The degree of change cannot be predicted due to the current ability of models and data to predict climate scenarios at a Forest scale. Societal preferences and priorities may not allow a response until a crisis occurs and ecosystems have already crossed thresholds, resulting in either very expensive recovery or no recovery at all.

The above climate change considerations will influence the land management direction that is developed and analyzed in the alternatives for forest plan revision. Climate change will be considered in the analysis and disclosure of the effects of each alternative. The following are a few ways that climate change considerations may influence the content of the plan.

- Desired conditions for vegetative and aquatic systems will account for possible effects of climate change as well as for the uncertainty associated with our current knowledge.

- Analysis of species sustainability will consider effects of climate change to habitats and possible changes in fire effects as a risk factor that may influence plan components adopted to assure sustainability.

- Identification of appropriate and implementable plan objectives to move toward desired conditions will need to consider climate change.

- Standards or guidelines for vegetation management practices may include provisions that consider the effects of climate change on desired species composition.

- The forest monitoring plan may include monitoring of the potential effects of climate change on forest resources.

- **ECOSYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY**

  Our Forest is becoming more valued for large areas of naturally functioning ecosystems. However, climate change, increasing pollution, spreading invasive plant and animal species, and human activities threaten to destabilize these same ecosystems. Demand for natural resources, whether for recreation or commodity contributes additional pressure to ecosystem sustainability. Affected, for example, are water quality and soil productivity, fish and wildlife habitat, and our overall enjoyment of national forests. Fragmentation of wildlife habitat resulting from growth patterns on lands adjacent to national forests, management activities, and increased use of national forest system lands is affecting our ability to manage for federally protected species, such as the northern spotted owl, Canada lynx,

grizzly bear, and gray wolf.

- **INSECTS AND DISEASE**
  In the past ten or more years, there have been extensive outbreaks of native insects resulting in widespread tree mortality over large landscapes. The most notable have been mountain pine beetle in lodgepole pine, and whitebark pine and western spruce budworm (a defoliator, primarily in grand fir and Douglas-fir) in true firs and Douglas-fir.

  The scale of these outbreaks is large based on aerial surveys dating back many decades. Suspected causes of the outbreaks include lack of disturbance resulting in overstocked forests, species composition changes also related to lack of disturbance, climate change influencing both insect life cycles and tree stress, and simplification of ecosystems. It is uncertain how climate change will affect the host or agents other than indications are that life cycles for several species (ex. mountain pine beetles and spruce beetles) are becoming shorter (meaning increasing populations) due to warming conditions.

  The introduction of white pine blister rust in the early 1900s continues to have a substantial effect on western white pine and especially limited populations of whitebark pine. Climate change may exacerbate white pine blister rust impacts in two ways: 1) wetter conditions may facilitate blister rust spore distribution, and 2) increased carbon dioxide levels will likely increase the levels of *Ribes* species, the primary alternate host of white pine blister rust.

  The introduced balsam woolly adelgid continues to increase slowly across northeast Washington contributing to mortality primarily in subalpine fir, grand fir, and Pacific silver fir. The effects of climate change on balsam woolly adelgid are unknown primarily due to uncertainty how the host species will respond and how the various parasites of balsam woolly adelgid will respond.

  The introduced larch casebearer, a defoliator of larch, is currently being controlled by introduced parasites. Climate change is anticipated to impact larch through drying conditions but the potential response of the casebearer or casebearer parasites is unknown. Several other exotic species have the potential to establish under warming or wetter conditions. Asian gypsy moth has been incidentally detected, but the insect could increase in deciduous species under climate change. Increasing spring precipitation resulting in higher humidity could increase vulnerability to sudden oak death in understory species such as Cascade azalea.

- **FIRE MANAGEMENT**
  Fire is an essential disturbance process within dynamic and resilient ecosystems. However, of significant concern on the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest is the recent history of uncharacteristic fire that is more severe, dangerous, and difficult and costly to suppress.

  Uncharacteristic fire may also have other consequences, such as erosion, reduction of soil productivity, flooding, spread of invasive plant species, reduction in water quality, fish

habitat and habitat for federally listed aquatic and terrestrial species, and destruction of the Forest's infrastructure and adjacent property values. Uncharacteristic fires are associated with increasingly high levels of dead and downed fuel, overstocked forests, drought, disease, and insect outbreaks. Adding to the complexity and danger of fire suppression is new construction of homes in the wildland interface areas adjacent to national forest lands.

To reduce the possibility of uncharacteristic wildfire, managers must look for ways to create resilient ecosystems through active management and restoration projects while juggling budgetary, environmental, social, and political constraints. The goal is to reduce the threat of uncharacteristic wildfires and restore fire to its natural role, thereby reducing the cost of fire suppression, ensuring public and firefighter safety, and protecting social and environmental resources.

Climate change predictions for the state of Washington indicate the potential doubling of area burned by wildfires by 2040 and a potential tripling of fire acres by 2080. It is uncertain how Congress and state agencies might respond to the funding of fire fighting resources in the future.

Nevertheless, fire-fighting resources are expected to be significantly strained, a situation that may be exacerbated by climate change. It is likely that more unplanned fires will be managed instead of being suppressed due to limited fire fighting resources. Risk management, fire fighting resource availability, fire fighter safety and desired conditions will drive fire decisions, but the result will still be more acres burned.

- **RECREATION**

  Recreational use of the Forest is projected to increase due to population growth, more retirees seeking outdoor exercise, and increased participation in specific activities such as snowmobiling. Residents are also seeking rural, healthful, outdoor-oriented lifestyles in communities surrounding the Forest. In most cases infrastructure supporting day use, such as trails and picnic areas, are lacking near communities. Changing demographics, such as the increase in use of the Forest by Hispanic families, is generating the need to provide appropriate infrastructure, such as facilities for large group use. Some activities that have greatly increasing in popularity since the current plans, such as mountain biking and ATV use, would benefit from enhancing opportunities on the Forest. Some activities lack an equitable distribution of settings across the planning area. Prior planning did little to consider the needs of winter recreationists.

  As development of private land continues, the Forest Service anticipates a greater dependence on the national forest for activities and experiences that are becoming increasingly rare elsewhere. In many locations, resource impacts and crowding associated with recreational use are on an increasing trend, with damage to riparian areas and illegal trail development being of particular concern.

Ongoing maintenance of deteriorating and costly recreational infrastructure is a challenge with limited resources. In particular, roads, trails, bridges, docks, water systems, septic systems, and buildings are high cost items to maintain and efficiencies need to be realized.

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act created the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail in 2009. Portions of the trail are substandard or do not fall on existing system trails. Improving the trail infrastructure including access points such as trailheads will continue over the life of this plan.

Climate change will likely affect recreational infrastructure and opportunities in a number of ways. Winter sports may be affected by the snowline shifting to higher elevations. Summer recreational uses will likely have a longer season of use. Flood events are predicted to increase, which in turn affects the resilience of our access systems such as roads, trails, bridges, and developed recreation facilities. The rising temperature predicted in streams will change opportunities for fishing. A potential rise in insects and disease infestations could increase hazard trees, the incidence of downed logs across roads and trails, and the likelihood of forest fires affecting recreational access.

A final challenge is maintaining relevancy of the national forest to the full cross-section of the population. Even though recreational use is expected to increase over the life of the land management plan, there are sectors of the population that seldom visit public lands or their use is projected to decrease. Maintaining recreation infrastructure and providing opportunities for a broad cross-section of the public will contribute to a future constituency.

- **ACCESS SYSTEM**

  Issues surrounding access to the national forest are complex. Limited budgets, maintenance backlogs, safety improvements, resource protection, road construction or reconstruction, providing access, and decommissioning of roads are just a few of the challenges transportation planners face.

  The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest administers over 8,000 miles of system roads. The cost of maintaining this extensive road network while providing recreation access, habitat effectiveness for wildlife, and restoring habitat for fish presents challenging resource trade-offs.

  Some challenges are central to managing forest access on system roads that were originally constructed for fire protection and timber harvest and other resource extraction. These typically narrow and steep roads, not designed for general passenger car use, provide few if any turnouts and are not necessarily compatible with an increasing need for recreation access.

  Posing an additional challenge is demand for convenient access to our Forest. Traditional points of access are being lost as private lands are developed adjacent to national forest lands, often resulting in development of unauthorized roads and trails. Increased housing

density in areas adjoining National Forest System lands adds to the potential for encroachment, trespass, and unauthorized use and occupation. Increased development activities on private lands in the vicinity of National Forest System boundaries can complicate resource planning on National Forest System lands and make land use planning and administration more expensive.

Additional private landowners adjacent to national forests means more neighbors with whom the Forest Service needs to coordinate in arranging access for fire management and recreation, managing ecosystems jointly across the landscape, and other management activities. This is a challenge when residential developments and private individuals are reluctant partners.

RENEWABLE FOREST PRODUCTS

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is experiencing a growing demand for energy sources, minerals, water, and renewable forest products such as huckleberries and mushrooms, material for floral arrangements, native plants and seed, medicinal plants, and firewood. Managers must effectively communicate with an increasing diversity of people with varying knowledge of national forest management objectives in order to encourage responsible stewardship of the national forest.

The Proposed Actions

Following are the proposed changes for plan revision, beginning with landscape character and dynamics and followed by social systems, management areas, and monitoring.

Each proposed action is prefaced with a background that discusses the current conditions and other important information. After the proposed actions is a section headed "Tools to Expect" that provides information on possible management practices. Please review the proposed actions and give us your comments.

To facilitate finding the proposed actions look for this graphic: 

Information about how to respond is found in the "Next Steps" chapter at the end of this document.

Proposed Actions for Landscape Character and Dynamics

This is where you will find the proposed actions for resources including plant habitats, vegetative systems, old forests, biological legacies, key watersheds, aquatic and riparian habitats, wildlife habitats, and disturbance from insects, disease, and fire.

Please review and respond to the proposed actions

AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN SYSTEMS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The current Wenatchee and Okanogan Land and Resource Management Plans were amended to include additional direction to maintain the quality of aquatic and riparian habitats. The Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS), as part of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP; USDA 1994) was applied to the Wenatchee and a portion of the Okanogan National Forests. The Pacific Salmon Fisheries Strategy (PACFISH; USDA 1994) was added to the portion of the Okanogan that supports anadromous fisheries. The remainder of the Okanogan Forest was amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH; USDA 1995), which provided similar direction for native non-anadromous fisheries.

This piecemeal approach to amendments has provided a set of direction with differing terminology that is confusing and complex to implement. Plan revision provides an opportunity to consolidate the direction into one place (the forest plan) providing an over-arching aquatic and riparian conservation strategy that can maintain and restore healthy watersheds throughout the Forest.

When the current Okanogan and Wenatchee forest plans were finalized, there were no fish species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Since completion of these forest plans, the following four fish species have been listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, critical habitat on the Okanogan and Wenatchee National

Forests has been designated for spring Chinook salmon and steelhead (Federal Register (b) Vol. 70 No. 170, September 2, 2005).

- Bull trout are listed as threatened on both Forests,
- Upper Columbia spring Chinook are listed as endangered on both Forests,
- Upper Columbia steelhead are listed as threatened on both Forests,
- Mid-Columbia steelhead are listed as threatened on the Wenatchee National Forest.

Forest plan revision gives the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest the ability to include management direction for these new ESA listed species and other fish species of conservation concern. Those other species of conservation concern may include the following.

- bull trout
- spring Chinook salmon
- steelhead
- westslope cutthroat trout
- interior redband trout (Okanogan National Forest only)

Since the current forest plans were completed, recovery plans for spring Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout have been prepared for the Upper Columbia (includes lands on the Tonasket, Methow Valley, Chelan, Entiat and Wenatchee River Ranger Districts) and the Yakima basin (includes the Naches and Cle Elum Ranger Districts). A draft bull trout recovery plan has been completed for Washington that includes all of the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. The direction in the current forest plans calls for consistency with any new recovery plans for listed species. In the revised forest plans, it may be necessary to provide additional direction that complements the recovery plans. The recovery plans identify priority areas where fish habitat needs to be protected or restored to recover the listed species.

In addition to the recovery planning process there are several other watershed and aquatic restoration planning efforts that are being implemented in the forest plan management area. These include sub-basin planning under the Northwest Power and Conservation Planning Act, Washington State Salmon Recovery Act, and Washington State Watershed Planning Act. The revised forest plan should be consistent with, and compliment, the recovery planning programs.

The Upper Columbia Recovery Plan highlights the importance of habitat for anadromous species and bull trout on national forest lands to meet recovery objectives. These priority areas identified in the recovery plans can be used to help determine the key watershed network in the forest plan. Besides protecting currently healthy habitat, typical habitat restoration activities include fixing culverts that are fish passage barriers, reducing sediment from forest roads, improving the health of riparian habitat and increasing habitat complexity.

The recovery plans have identified limiting factors and threats, short and long term habitat objectives in general, priority assessment units (similar to watersheds) for protection and

restoration, general actions needed for restoration, and in the case of the upper Columbia River, an implementation schedule of specific actions.

The current forest plans, as amended by the NWFP, PACFISH and INFISH, do not integrate restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems or facilitate integrated management of aquatic resources with upslope terrestrial vegetation and hazardous fuels reduction and recreation management. Roads directly affect aquatic habitat and fish by disrupting hydrologic function, increasing sediment delivery to streams and blocking aquatic species access to habitat. Recreation, especially dispersed recreation, can degrade aquatic and riparian habitat. Unrestricted dispersed recreation has resulted in accelerated soil and bank erosion, loss of large wood in stream channels and floodplains and harassment of spawning fish.

Increasingly recognized is the need for management of vegetation and aquatic habitat to be viewed in an integrated fashion with the primary management constraint being the conservation and restoration of natural processes that create diverse and resilient ecosystems. This suggests a different paradigm for land management, moving from fish and wildlife being constraints to vegetation management to integrated management of the ecosystem. The revised forest plan will recognize the dynamic nature of aquatic environments and the role of disturbance in creating and maintaining habitat over time.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Proposed management direction would sustain and improve watershed areas through identification of riparian management areas and a network of key watersheds, and giving direction that provides for water quality and aquatic/riparian habitat.

Watershed networks – As in the current forest plans, we will carry forward the use of watershed networks that have good habitat and functionally intact ecosystems that contribute to and enhance conservation and recovery of specific threatened or endangered fish species, fish species of conservation concern, and high water quality and natural flow regime. The networks would contribute to short-term conservation and long-term recovery at the recovery unit for listed fish or other appropriate population scale.

Roads –Roads in key watersheds would not present substantial risk to soil, water and aquatic resources.

Watershed integrity – Desired conditions would allow key watersheds to have high watershed integrity and contribute to resilient aquatic and riparian ecosystems.

Key Watersheds – Objectives for restoration work would be concentrated in the watersheds listed below. See the “tools to expect” section below to understand what methods might be used.

Lower Chewuch, Peshastin Creek, Little Naches watershed restoration - Reduce road generated sediment on 120 to 150 acres of road prism in each watershed. Reduce constructed stream channel confinement on 10 to 12 miles of road in each watershed. In stream reaches where woody debris is lacking, strategically install large wood pieces/complexes to restore stream structure, provide habitat and help wood impoverished streams begin recovering natural channel complexity.

Nason Creek watershed restoration - Collaborate with partners to reduce human constructed stream channel confinement by 10 to 12 miles. For all other watersheds on the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. containing either a municipal water supply or listed fish presence, reduce road-generated sediment on 200 to 300 acres of road prism (total in all watersheds) and reduce man-made stream channel confinement by 20 to 25 miles (total in all watersheds) using similar methods as for the priority watersheds listed above. In stream reaches where woody debris is lacking, consider installing large wood pieces/complexes to restore stream structure, provide habitat and help wood impoverished streams begin recovering natural channel complexity.

Desired conditions would also allow for the following:

Watershed and landscape scale features –National Forest System lands contribute to the distribution, diversity, and functioning complexity of watershed and landscape-scale features, including ecological processes of natural disturbance regimes, of the aquatic and riparian ecosystems to which plant and animal species, populations, and communities are adapted.

Spatial and habitat connectivity and drainage network connections –National Forest System lands contribute to the spatial and habitat connectivity within and between watersheds. Floodplains, wetlands, upslope areas, headwater tributaries, and intact habitat refugia provide lateral, longitudinal, and drainage network connections. These network connections provide chemically and physically unobstructed routes to areas critical for fulfilling life history requirements of aquatic, riparian-dependent, and many terrestrial species of plants and animals.

Self-sustaining populations - National Forest System lands contribute to habitat and ecological conditions that are capable of supporting self-sustaining populations of native and desired non-native, riparian-dependent plant and animal species.

Water quality - National Forest System lands contribute to water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems. Water quality is within the range that maintains the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of the system and benefits survival, growth, reproduction, and migration of individuals composing aquatic and riparian communities.

Sediment regimes - National Forest System lands contribute to the sediment regime, from upland areas, consistent with the vegetation, biophysical setting and fire regime.

In-stream flows - National Forest System lands contribute to in-stream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats and to retain patterns of sediment, nutrient, and wood routing.
Floodplain inundation - National Forest System lands contribute to the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation that are within the natural range of variation.

Wetland seeps and springs - National Forest System lands contribute to the timing, variability, and water table elevation in wetlands, seeps and springs and are within the natural range of variation.

Native plant communities - National Forest System lands contribute to the species composition and structural diversity of native plant communities in riparian management areas (including wetlands).

Non-native species - National Forest System lands contribute to native assemblages of riparian-dependent plants and animals that are free of nuisance species.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Management activities are dependent on budget trends. They involve the establishment and maintenance of habitat and ecological conditions capable of supporting self-sustaining populations of native and desired non-native, riparian-dependent plant and animal species. Vegetation management activities may include use of planned and unplanned fire ignitions, silvicultural prescriptions, and hand or mechanical treatments including harvesting of forest products.

Stream restoration actions are likely to occur at selected stream segments to improve degraded conditions and stream channel stability. Such actions may include culvert removal, stream crossing surfacing (placing crushed rock on road surface approaches), installing drainage crossings, and road decommissioning. Other methods could include reshaping stream banks to stable slopes; removing streamside berm material that disconnects streams from floodplains; constructing instream structures to stabilize the channel and improve aquatic habitat; planting riparian-type vegetation; and treating invasive weeds in riparian areas.

PLANT HABITATS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The plan will provide management direction for preventing introduction and spread of invasive plants and treating and restoring infested sites.

Invasive plants have many undesirable consequences. They displace native plants; reduce forage for wildlife and livestock; degrade habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; increase soil erosion and reduce water quality; reduce soil productivity; and change the intensity and frequency of fires. Currently, invasive plants are spreading at a rate of 8 to 12 percent per year. Invasive plants can spread between National Forest System lands and neighboring areas, affecting all land ownerships.

Amendments to the current plans, most recently the 2005 Pacific Northwest Region Invasive Plant Program Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants Record of Decision, have updated forest plan management of invasive plants. That management direction is intended to decrease the rate of spread of invasive plants, while minimizing adverse effects to land management programs, human health, and the environment. Early detection and rapid response is emphasized to increase the effectiveness and reduce potential for detrimental impacts of invasive plant treatments. The revised forest plan carries forward the intent of that direction.

The plan will discuss two groups of plant species: federally listed threatened and endangered plant species (TE) that occur (documented) or may occur (suspected), and USDA Forest Service Region 6 sensitive plant species (S) that occur in the planning area. Threatened and endangered species are those formally listed by the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Sensitive species include those vascular and non-vascular plant taxa and fungi from the R6 Regional Forester Sensitive Species List. Habitat for many threatened, endangered and sensitive (TES) plant species include unique habitats that may be rare or represent a small portion of a particular landscape. In forested landscapes these unique habitats are ecosystems such as meadows, wetlands (marsh, bog, fen, carr, swamp, spring, and seep), riparian vegetation, alpine fellfields, rock outcrops, cliffs, or talus that are suitable TES plant habitat.

There are two threatened plant species suspected on the Forest; water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Ute ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*). Since the current forest plans were completed, two plant taxa were federally listed as endangered. These are local endemics that occur only in the central portion of the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F.; showy stickseed (*Hackelia venusta*) and Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow (*Sidalcea oregano var. calva*).

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest currently has 91 R6 sensitive plant species existing within the planning area: 70 vascular plant, 4 lichen, 2 bryophyte, and 15 fungi taxa. These taxa occur from high elevation alpine tundra to warm, low elevation forests as well as moist meadows, wetlands, and riparian areas.

In addition to those plants described above, the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. manages plants identified through the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and BLM Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl signed in 1994. This decision produced management direction for survey and manage non-vascular (bryophytes and lichens) and vascular plant taxa and fungi associated with late-successional and old-growth forests within the range of the northern spotted owl. Subsequent legal challenges modified the management framework for survey and manage species. Currently, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is managing survey and manage vascular and non-vascular plant taxa and fungi under forest plan amendments contained in the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001) without further changes initiated in subsequent annual species reviews. There are 3 survey and manage vascular plant species, 4 lichen species, 1 moss species, and 15 fungi taxa known to occur on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Survey and Manage - There are no proposed changes to the survey and manage framework.

Plants - The plan would contribute to the diversity of healthy native ecosystems, which is integral to providing appropriate ecological conditions for a diversity of plant species. Management direction, similar to what is in current forest plans, will continue to protect threatened and endangered species.

Invasive plants - The plan will emphasize prevention, early detection, and rapid response, so that any new invasive plant infestations are contained, reduced, or eradicated. In order to move toward desired conditions, the plan would propose as an invasive plant objective the treatment of an average of 5,000 to 10,000 acres per year on the Forest. Most invasive plant treatments will occur in priority subwatersheds to protect biodiversity and associated values. The plan would emphasis use of education and interpretation to aid in recognizing, reporting, and preventing the spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species that threaten ecosystem resilience.

Native plant materials – Plan direction would direct that native plant materials be incorporated and integrated into revegetation, rehabilitation, and restoration projects. The use of native plant materials will support the resiliency and integrity of native plant communities.

Tribal uses - Plan direction would contribute to plant resources for traditional tribal uses and provide plant materials in accordance with applicable treaties, regulations, and executive orders.

Grazing – By providing direction for managing the timing, intensity, duration, and frequency of grazing the plan would allow for completion of plant annual life cycles including sufficient seed or vegetative reproduction to maintain native plant community productivity and biodiversity. Soil

disturbance would be managed so degradation of native plant community composition, structure, and productivity is avoided.

Specific plan species recovery - Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow (*Sildacea oregana var. calva*) **and showy stickseed** (*Hackelia venusta)*-Direction that would protect and manage known populations, enhance suitable habitat, reintroduce viable populations into appropriate sites, survey efforts in unoccupied habitat, and monitor the extant populations for threats and habitat/ population trends would be included in the plan.

Unique habitats – Desired conditions would provide for unique habitats that contribute to high quality suitable habitat for endangered, threatened, and sensitive plant species. A percentage of unique habitats would be restored each year on the Forest over the next 15 years.

Habitat and population trends – Desired conditions would provide for population trends, amount of occupied habitat, and amount of unoccupied suitable habitat to be stable or increasing for federally listed and sensitive plant species.

Plant species composition – In the revised forest plan, native species and native plant communities will be the desired dominant vegetation. Invasive species would be managed to limit impacts to and influences on native plant community diversity, resiliency, and composition, soil cover, stability, and organic processes, fire regimes, or hydrologic processes.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Plant management activities involve the establishment and maintenance of habitat components needed to provide for desireable, native plant communities. Typically these are accomplished through many of the same activities described in the vegetation section, such as natural fire. Additional activities can be actions needed to manage disturbance to plant habitat components such as road closures and fencing, and maintainance of habitat components such as snags, woody debris, and pollinators, and use of herbicides.

VEGETATIVE SYSTEMS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The current forest plans attempted to balance the needs of ecosystem management with the provision of goods and services. However, over the past decade, changes in ecological conditions and social values have added to the challenges of maintaining this balance. Climate change may be contributing to increased numbers of uncharacteristic wildfires and spread of insect infestations and disease. Subdivisions and houses

established immediately adjacent to the Forest are increasing the costs to the agency for fire suppression. These changes are affecting the Forest's ability to provide healthy plant and wildlife habitat, clean water, forest products, and settings for recreation.

Potential increases in wildfires, disease and pests stemming from climate change and other factors will alter the structure and composition of forest and rangeland vegetation. However, while fire is an essential element of a resilient ecosystem, uncharacteristic fire increases erosion, reduces soil productivity, spreads invasive species, reduces water quality, aquatic and wildlife habitat, and destroys recreation settings.

Fire tends to grab the headlines especially when it threatens homes and structures. However, in the past ten years insect impacted acres have exceeded fire acres. The following graph compares fire acres with the two largest insect factors: western spruce budworm (WSBW) and mountain pine beetle in lodgepole pine (MPB-LPP).

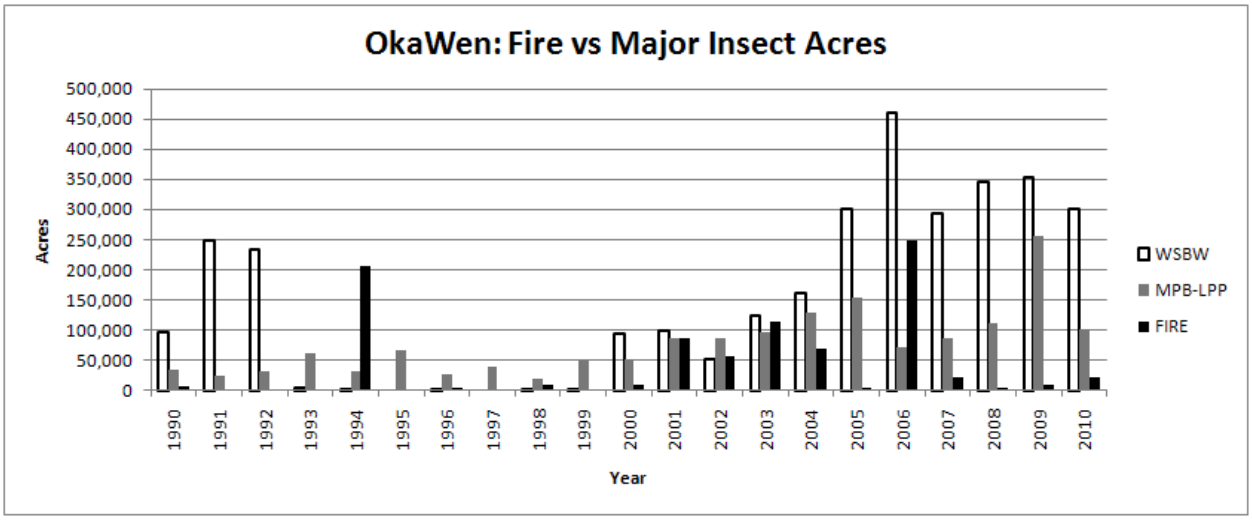


Figure 2. Comparison of fire acres with western spruce budworm (WSBW) and mountain pine beetle in lodgepole pine (MPB-LPP)

PROPOSED ACTIONS

A shift in focus from commodity production to ecosystem restoration[1] and forest health is being proposed.

Vegetation management practices would support a variety of resource objectives, ranging from creating diverse wildlife habitats to maintaining scenic values while providing forest products. Plan

[1] By restoration, we mean the process of assisting the recovery of resilience and the capacity of a system to adapt to changes if the environment where the system exists has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Ecological restoration focuses on reestablishing ecosystem functions by modifying or managing the composition, structural arrangement, and processes necessary to make a terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem sustainable and resilient under current and future conditions.

direction would make ecosystems more resilient to disturbance driven by climate change, reduce impacts of insects and diseases, and produce quality forest commodities.

The plan would describe the desired range of vegetation structure, composition and spatial patterning, by vegetation group. The plan would define and describe the role of disturbance agents (such as fire, insects, and diseases) on the Forest. The plan would highlight the importance of having snags, down woody debris, and large, old trees to soil productivity, wildlife habitats, and landscape settings. Restoration projects require integrated treatments, and the plan will provide vegetation management direction in an integrated manner, rather than focusing on separate programs.

The vegetation desired conditions would be arranged in five conifer dominated groups and nine other non-conifer vegetation groups.

Table 1—Vegetation groups of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Conifer Dominated Vegetation Groups	Other Vegetation Groups
Dry Forest	Alpine and subalpine shrub/herbaceous
Mesic Forest	Low elevation herbaceous
Cold-Moist Forest	Montane herbaceous
Cold-Dry Forest	Montane shrubland
Subalpine Parkland	Riparian shrub, deciduous, and conifer
	Shrub-steppe
	Wetland/riparian herbaceous
	Oak-ponderosa pine woodland
	Upland deciduous woodland

Desired structural stage distribution for each conifer vegetation group would be identified as shown in the example below for the dry forest vegetation group.

Table 2—Example of a desired structural stage distribution for dry forest vegetation group

Conifer dominated group	Stand Initiation	Stem Exclusion Open Canopy	Stem Exclusion Closed Canopy	Understory Reinitiation	Young Forest Multi Strata	Old Forest Multi Strata	Old Forest Single Strata
Dry Forest	0-7.7%	0-17.7%	0-11.3%	0-25.3%	0-18.5%	0-12.3%	0-3.6%

In other words, for the dry forest vegetation group, the desired condition is to have the vegetation group fall within this distribution of structural stage.

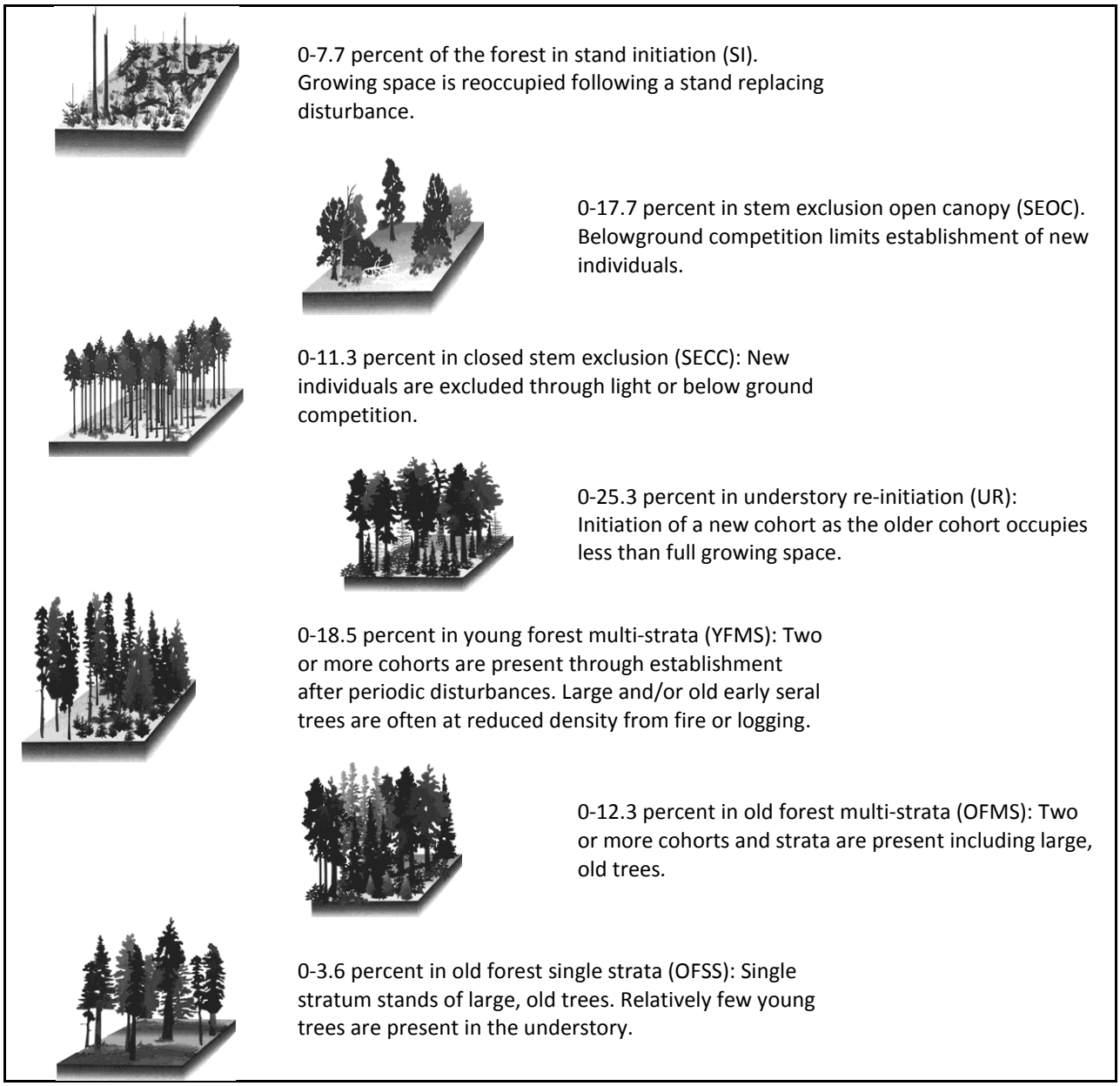


Figure 3. Desired condition for the dry forest vegetation group

In addition to describing the distribution of structural stages (table 2), the revised forest plan would give management direction to have structural stages that are resilient and compatible with maintaining characteristic disturbance processes. Habitat conditions for associated species would

be present. Structure would contribute to aesthetic settings, particularly along scenic byways and highways.

The revised forest plan would recognize fire as an essential disturbance element within dynamic and resilient ecosystems in both forested and non-forested systems. Fire significantly contributes to ecosystem biodiversity and ecosystem processes and functions. Use of fire is encouraged in contributing to long-term resilience, integrity, and biodiversity of ecosystems.

While recognizing the role of fire, the plan would also recognize that protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. The plan would give direction that the Forest, when involved in managing wildfires, should set priorities for protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, the highest value to be protected is human resources.

Spatial Patterns

The plan would describe the vegetation landscape in terms of patterns of groupings and gaps in the vegetation; in other words the scale of complex patches of vegetation that are desirable in a forested landscape. This would reflect large natural landscape scale processes affected by disturbance patterns, topography, geomorphic features, and weather. The desired condition is to have a spatially and temporally diverse pattern of gaps and groupings. Research shows our natural landscape should have patches ranging in size from 10 acres on over 90 percent of the forest to patches larger than 2,200 acres on less than 7/100^{ths} of the forest.

Smaller scale spatial patterning, less than 10 acres (4 ha), is dependent on site specific dynamics (ex: individual or clump insect mortality, root disease pockets, windthrow, or smaller scale higher severity fire) or site features such as edaphic soils, topography, or hydrologic relationships (e.g. seeps, ponds, meadows, or riparian).

Table 3--Desired condition for spatial patterning for areas 10 acres (4 hectares) and larger

Percent of Landscape	Range of patch size (Acres)	Range of patch size (Hectares)
91-98	10-470	4-190
1.4-5.6	470-1,160	190-470
0.5-1.1	1,160-1,830	470-740
0.2-0.5	1,830-2,200	740-890
0.3 - 0.07	> 2,200	> 890

BIOLOGICAL LEGACIES

There are a number of processes that contribute to the resilience and biodiversity of ecosystems at landscape levels. Fire and effects resulting from insect and disease infestation are obvious major processes that influence ecosystems where, in the past ten years, the effects of insects have been more influential than fire. Additional processes include plant establishment, plant growth and competition, development of old structure, windthrow, floods, landslides, and avalanches.

It is desirable to have old and very large trees on the Forest, so the revised forest plan would provide direction to have structural legacies and patterns remain through disturbance processes and contribute to resiliency, recovery and ecosystem heterogeneity. Habitat conditions for associated species would be present. Structure would contribute to aesthetic settings, particularly along scenic byways and highways.

The plan would also provide direction to retain old trees and enough of the younger and largest trees to meet the large tree desired conditions. The plan would prioritize retention of large, younger trees that are in the best condition and are not limiting nearby older trees through resource competition. The plan would do this by providing desired conditions by conifer dominated vegetation group, as shown in the example for the dry forest vegetation group in table 4.

Table 4--Desired conditions for large, old trees for dry forest vegetation group by structure class

Structure class	Dry forest	
	Minimum trees/acre over 20" dbh	Maximum trees/acre over 20" dbh
SI	0	16
SECC/SEOC	17	34
UR/YFMS	11	25
	Minimum trees/ac over 25" dbh	
OFMS/OFSS	18	

Biological legacies include snags and coarse woody debris. The current forest plans give direction to account for desired snags and coarse woody debris and the revised forest plan would continue with this approach. For example, the revised forest plan would provide for a desired amount of snag and coarse woody debris by vegetation group as shown in table 5.

Table 5—Example of desired amounts of snag and coarse woody debris by dry forest vegetation group

Forest vegetation group	Snag DBH Class	Snags Per Acre (100-acre basis)	Downed logs & CWD Per acre(100-acre basis)	Log size
Dry Forest	10 – 20 in.	3.4 to 6.8	3-7 tons	Minimum: 10” large end x 16 feet Preferred:16” large end x 33 feet or larger
	> 20 in.	1.4 to 2.1		

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Vegetation management activities may include use of planned and unplanned fire ignitions, a range of silvicultural methods for managing patches of trees, use of herbicides and pesticides to treat

insect and disease outbreaks as well as invasive weeds, and hand or mechanical treatments including harvesting of forest products. The estimated or projected size of the vegetation management activities (acres or number of management activity) is based on the ecological needs of the resource, budget trends, and available resources. The Forest Service will promote re-growth of harvested or other disturbed forests with a variety of regeneration practices, such as natural regeneration and tree planting to achieve site specific desired conditions and objectives.

WILDLIFE HABITATS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Since the completion of the current forest plans, new wildlife species have been listed and others delisted, and new science is available concerning those species that were formally included in the plans. The northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species in 1990, shortly after the Okanogan and Wenatchee forest plans were completed. A grizzly bear recovery zone was established on portions of the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests in 1997 and needs to be integrated into the revised plan. The Canada lynx was listed as a threatened species in 2000. The bald eagle and gray wolf were listed at the time the plans were completed. The species that have been removed from the federal Endangered Species List since the completion of the current forest plans are the peregrine falcon and bald eagle. Several wildlife species have also been added to the Region 6 Sensitive Species list including the white-headed woodpecker, bighorn sheep, wolverine, fisher, several amphibian and bat species, and some invertebrates.

Considerable new science has developed since the current forest plans concerning the viability of a wide-array of wildlife species. In addition, methods for assessing species viability has evolved considerably and a new approach, referred to as the focal species approach, has replaced previous approaches for the selection of surrogate species for conservation planning.

The management of deer and elk habitats on national forest lands remains an important issue for many members of the public. New science suggests that providing for thermal cover was over-emphasized in the current plans. The new plan will still address thermal cover but will also address the importance of providing for habitat effectiveness on key deer and elk habitats.

Recreational activities associated with wildlife include hunting and wildlife viewing. These activities result in important contributions to local economies. The Forest has developed several wildlife viewing areas and opportunities. The Forest continues to cooperate with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide and enhance hunting opportunities.

Changes in Law, Policy and Regulatory Direction

A recovery plan for grizzly bears in the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area was completed in 1997 that outlined the steps needed to recover grizzly bears to a sustainable population level. Two of the recovery steps that need to be addressed in the revised forest plans are:

- Designation of management situation areas
- Development of an access management strategy that would replace the interim policy that has been in place since 1997

The access management strategy for the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area would follow the access management guidance provided by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC). These changes pertain only to the portion of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest that lies within the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area.

The Canada lynx was federally listed as a threatened species in 2000; however, no recovery plan has yet been completed. In 2000, an interagency team completed the Canada lynx conservation assessment and strategy (LCAS) that is used as a reference for planning and consultation. As per the Interagency Lynx Agreement signed in 2000, forest plans would be revised to employ lynx management strategies using the LCAS and other new science.

Source populations for wolves that may disperse into the planning area include those moving south from British Columbia. Wolves have been documented in the planning area, including den and rendezvous sites with wolf pups. According to the Federal Register (Vol. 68, No. 62, table 1), gray wolf den sites that occur on federal lands may be protected from some kinds of human activities during the pup rearing period (April 1 to June 30) to reduce the potential for disturbance. The revised forest plan needs to address how these sites would be protected.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) reintroduced bighorn sheep in several locations on national forest lands. Other herds were established in the 1960s on the Wenatchee River and Naches Ranger Districts and are relatively close to active domestic sheep grazing allotments. This raised a concern by the WDFW that disease could be transferred from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep, with the potentially serious consequences of a bighorn sheep die-off. In 1999, a memorandum of understanding (MOU-6-99-17-20-004) was signed between the Wenatchee National Forest and the WDFW to work cooperatively to reduce the potential for disease spread and to cooperate in future efforts to manage bighorn sheep. These efforts need to be integrated into forest plan revision.

The wolverine and fisher are listed as Region 6 sensitive species and a petition for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act is being pursued. An interagency team of biologists and scientists are developing conservation assessments and strategies for wolverine and fisher. The revised forest plan needs to incorporate the information developed in the conservation assessments.

A terrestrial species assessment was completed in order to identify plan components that would be important for the viability of species. The assessment followed Region 6 process and included an evaluation of over 700 species resulting in 209 being identified as species of conservation concern. These species were then grouped into 28 habitat groups and 34 focal species representative of each group were formally assessed for their viability. The results of these assessments were used to develop key components of this proposed action. Some of the key findings from this assessment include the following:

- Riparian habitats are important for a variety of the focal species assessed and a strategy that protects riparian habitats and provides for wildlife habitat connectivity is needed (see the aquatic section).
- Late-successional forests are generally below their historic range of variability. In some forest types, such as the dry and mesic forests, active restoration of wildlife habitat, including restoring the large tree component, is important for focal species viability.
- Restoring habitat effectiveness and connectivity is important in key areas for several focal species.
- The availability of large (>20" dbh) snag habitat is generally lacking in some forest types because of past management practices and altered disturbance regimes.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The plan will describe conditions that would provide quality habitat for wildlife species. Proposed management direction would restore and improve habitat through objectives for selected habitats and species. Proposed objectives include the restoration and improvement of habitat, habitat effectiveness and core areas on approximately 250,000 acres over the next 15 years.

In some cases, plan components will apply to a large group of species, while other components are species specific.

To implement the relevant parts of the grizzly bear recovery plan, the Forest Service will map priority habitats for federal lands in the planning areas that fall within the North Cascades recovery zone using a process that has been used in other recovery areas, and will include local expertise. Access management goals that consider the current conditions and balance recovery goals with recreation and other resource needs will also be developed.

A conservation assessment was completed for the Canada lynx in 2000 (Ruediger et al. 2000). The available science on lynx biology and ecology is summarized by Koehler and Aubry (1994), and Ruggerio et al. (2000). The lynx conservation strategy that resulted from recent research needs to be considered in the forest planning process. In addition, a regional scale evaluation of lynx habitat connectivity that will provide insights into potentially important habitat connections should be considered in land management planning.

Regarding the gray wolf, the Forest Service proposes using the best available science and approaches used in other conservation plans to develop management direction for den and rendezvous site protection in the event a gray wolf den or rendezvous site is identified within the federal lands in the planning area.

Since the northern spotted owl was federally listed in 1990, a considerable amount of habitat has been reduced because of large-scale high-severity fires. This is particularly the case on the northern half of the Wenatchee portion of the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. and on the Methow Ranger District. This situation is likely to be greatly exacerbated by climate change. In addition, the invasion of the barred owl has greatly affected several of the habitat reserves that are comprised of moist forest types and lie in valley bottoms (e.g., Chiwawa LSR) resulting in displacement of spotted owls. These issues make it difficult to predict what part of the forested landscape would be most important for recovery of the spotted owl. As a result, to address spotted owl recovery and to better integrate conservation of spotted owl habitat with disturbances, barred owls, and climate change, a whole-landscape approach is proposed. This represents a considerable departure from previous strategies where spotted owl conservation was emphasized on a portion of the landscape. Under this strategy habitat would be managed across the landscape using the historical and future range of variability to determine habitat amounts and arrangements that are most likely to be sustainable, appropriately connected, and most resilient to changing climatic conditions.

To address key bighorn sheep issues, the Forest Service proposes to work with the WDFW to identify management areas for bighorn sheep and develop management guidelines. These issues would include potential interactions with domestic sheep, habitat management, and habitat effectiveness.

Summaries of the available science were completed for wolverine and fisher in 1994. Wolverines have been discovered at several locations in the planning area; however, fishers have been extirpated. A regional assessment of landscape connectivity for the wolverine was completed in 2001. This information needs to be integrated into land management planning.

Habitat conditions for all threatened and endangered species

The plan would describe habitat conditions (amount, distribution, and connectivity) that contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species. Management activities, such as winter recreation would continue to be managed to reduce disturbance, displacement and, in some cases, restrict winter use to designated routes. As is the practice now, activities would be timed so as not to disturb listed species during critical periods.

Habitat Restoration - A coarse filter versus fine filter approach will be used to determine if management activities for restoration are meeting the intent of the plan. At the coarse filter level, management activities must comply with the plan components within the Vegetative Systems of the revised plan to satisfy requirements for a subset of wildlife species. Wildlife species that fall under the coarse filter include deer, elk, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, and numerous focal species.

Management activities at the fine filter level must also comply with additional plan components that are species specific. The fine filter includes species such as northern spotted owl.

Northern Spotted Owl (Okanogan-Wenatchee)

Another wildlife species the plan would provide for is the northern spotted owl. The plan would identify the habitat needs and conditions for nesting, roosting, and foraging that would provide for high quality habitat within the range of the northern spotted owl.

The desired conditions would be to have, at the Forest-wide scale, at least 30 percent of the habitat capable area containing nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl. Seventy-five percent of that habitat would be within a 1.8-mile radius of an activity center of a territorial pair of spotted owls as measured over a 5-year period. Habitat capable areas would include the following forest series: Douglas-fir, grand fir, western hemlock, and Pacific silver fir. If the nesting, roosting and foraging habitat amounts were not currently available at the percentages in table 6, areas would have to be identified for future spotted owl habitat.

Table 6--Desired condition for nesting, roosting and foraging habitat measured at the watershed (10th field HUC) and subbasin (8th field HUC) scale

Forest Vegetation Group	Structure class within which nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat may occur	Desired Condition of nesting, roosting and foraging habitat (percent of habitat capable area)
Dry and Mesic Forest	Stem exclusion closed canopy Understory reinitiation Young forest multistory Old forest multistory	30-35
Cold-moist forest	Stem exclusion closed canopy Understory reinitiation Young forest multistory Old forest multistory	50-75

Nesting, roosting and foraging habitat within a 0.7-mile radius of an occupied spotted owl activity center would be retained unless:

- Nesting, roosting and foraging habitat is in a strategic location that would reduce the risk of additional nesting, roosting and foraging habitat loss to uncharacteristic, high severity fire within the landscape.
- Habitat is currently being impacted by insects and disease and will result in imminent loss of nesting, roosting and foraging habitat characteristics.

Known active nest sites for the northern spotted owl and several other raptor species would be protected from human disturbance caused by management activities to reduce the risk of nest abandonment or decline in productivity. Periods of protection would range from January 1 through August 31, depending on the species.

Grizzly bear

The desired conditions for grizzly bear management situations 1 and 2 – core areas for grizzly bear would provide this information:

The quality and quantity of core areas available to grizzly bears are maintained or restored. Grizzly bear core areas remain in place for ten or more years in order for bears to find and use these areas.

The plan would provide desired conditions for road densities within grizzly bear management situation 1 and 2 using the Backcountry, Backcountry Motorized, and Active Restoration-2 management areas that limit the road density.

The plan would provide the long-term core desired conditions as shown in table 7.

Table 7—Sample of the long-term core area desired conditions for bear management units on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. There are 22 bear management units stretching from the Canadian border to I-90.

Bear Management Unit (BMU)	Long Term Core Desired Conditions (percent of BMU)
Ashnola	>70
Chiwawa	>70
Cle Elum	>55
Granite Creek	>70
Icicle	>70

Canada lynx habitat

A desired condition for Canada lynx habitat would be to manage projects that reduce horizontal cover (snowshoe hare habitat) in mature, multi-storied Engelmann spruce/subalpine fir vegetation so they may occur only:

1. Within 300 feet of administrative sites, dwellings, out buildings, recreation sites and special use permit areas, including infrastructure within permitted ski area boundaries.
2. For research studies or genetic tree test evaluating genetically improved reforestation stock.
3. For incidental removal during post-fire timber harvest.

Management actions will not change more than 15 percent of the lynx habitat in a lynx analysis unit (LAU) to an unsuitable condition in a ten-year period.

Proposed management direction for the Canada lynx would include the following.

Expansion or new construction of recreation and administrative facilities should be located in or adjacent to existing areas of development, rather than creating new developed recreation or administrative sites. Recreation developments and operations should be planned in ways that contribute to lynx movement and maintain the effectiveness of lynx habitat.

There would be no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes into lynx habitat at the lynx analysis unit scale, unless the overall condition of lynx habitat is maintained or improved. Access to non-recreation special uses, such as mineral and energy exploration and development sites, would be designated routes or designated over-the-snow routes. This would not apply to areas within permitted ski area boundaries, winter logging, trails that are rerouted for public safety, or to accessing private in-holdings.

Vegetation management of coniferous vegetation would not reduce the suitability of lynx habitat within an LAU below 70 percent.

Tree stem densities in early seral forests (Engelmann spruce/subalpine fir, including seral lodgepole pine) would not be reduced by vegetation management practices, except within 300' of structures (i.e. administrative sites, dwellings, out buildings), recreation sites and special use permit areas, including infrastructure within permitted ski area boundaries.

Focal Wildlife Species

Management actions are proposed to provide habitat conditions (amount, arrangement, and reduced risk factors) that contribute to the viability of focal wildlife species and the other species they represent. Some of the most important management actions include reducing the negative impacts that roads have on habitat effectiveness and habitat connectivity, protection of key habitats such as riparian and wetland habitats, restoration of old forest conditions and structural components of old forests such as large old trees and large snag habitat, and limiting the exposure of bat species to white-nose syndrome.

Habitat connectivity - The plan will emphasize the need for habitat connectivity and provide direction for management adjacent to crossing structures, such as the I-90 highway wildlife crossings under construction, to encourage use by wildlife.

Habitat effectiveness with regard to roads – Habitat effectiveness on winter and summer range is influenced by road and trail use (motorized and non motorized) in the form of snowmobiling, snow-grooming, skiing, and snowshoeing in the winter; hiking, biking and motorcycling in the summer; and open roads. Activities will be managed to reduce disturbance, displacement and in some cases restrict use to designated routes.

Bighorn sheep

Management direction would be to provide temporal or spatial separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep to reduce the risk of potential disease spread. Additional efforts will be made to enhance habitat effectiveness on bighorn sheep ranges through the management of human access.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Wildlife management involves the establishment, restoration and maintenance of habitat components needed to provide food, cover, shelter, and water for animals. Typically these are accomplished through many of the same activities described above in the vegetation section's tools.

Additional activities can be actions needed to manage access, such as closing unauthorized roads and trails to ensure habitat free from the disturbance of motor vehicles.

Proposed Actions for Social Systems

This is where you will find the proposed actions for topics including forest access, livestock grazing, recreation, renewable forest products, and scenery.

Please review and respond to the proposed actions

ACCESS SYSTEM

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Access refers to the national forest road and trail system, and the bridges and docks that are a part of the system, which are managed by the Forest to provide access on the national forest. There are approximately 8400 miles of system roads on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest has approximately 4000 miles of summer-use trails and 1,700 miles of groomed snowmobile trail. Groomed or marked Nordic trail systems include 1,100 miles.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The goal is for the Forest to continue to have an access system of authorized roads, bridges, trails, and docks that is safe, affordable, and environmentally sound, responds to administrative and public needs to the extent practicable, meets obligations to public and private cooperators, and is efficient to manage. The system would continue to provide reasonable public access where suitable, support Forest management objectives, and provide Forest Service administrative access where suitable. Road and trail rights-of-way to access National Forest System lands would continue to appropriately satisfy public needs and reasonably facilitate planned resource activities. All Forest system roads and trails would have adequate legal access for crossing non-National Forest System lands.

The goal is for the system to be adequately maintained and commensurate with maintenance levels, levels of use and available funding. Any National Forest System road, bridge, trail, or dock that is not needed to meet resource or social and economic objectives and/or user-created roads would be decommissioned and the landscape restored. The desired condition is to reduce miles of

inventoried unauthorized roads, and minimize the development and proliferation of new unauthorized roads and trails.

The Forest goal is to provide a transportation system where each road can be maintained to its assigned maintenance level and each bridge meets structural standards; maintenance standards would be set so that they consider access needs, use, environmental impacts, and the ability to fund long-term maintenance needs; and all commercial users of National Forest system roads, including private landowners and local, state, and other federal agencies would share in the costs of maintaining the roads they use.

Trail System – Desired conditions for the Forest system of trails would be:

- To provide a diverse array of maintained system trails that contribute a variety of settings and complements local community trail systems while minimizing user conflicts across the Forest. Trails would provide for a spectrum of difficulty levels and user types, and be located in diverse ecological, geological, and scenic settings.

- To provide a variety of motorized and non-motorized trails for summer and winter recreational opportunities that is distributed across the Forest. Trails would access a destination, provide for loop opportunities, connect to a larger system, or provide for interpretation and education. Universally accessible trails, often featured as interpretive trails, would be available on the Forest.

- Where feasible, to provide trail opportunities that are available across the Forest including lower elevations near population centers that accommodate the active nature of the current population and the growing desire for family outings and interpretive trails close to communities and schools.

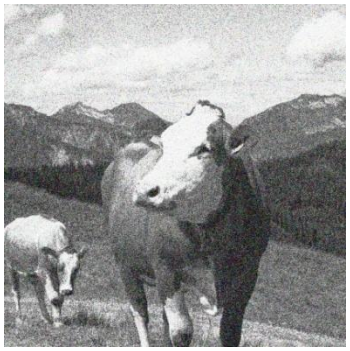
Trail management – To move towards a desired condition, the Forest is proposing the following. Over the next 15 years,

- Acquire adequate legal access for all trails crossing non-National Forest System lands**.**
- Reduce the trail maintenance backlog on ten to twenty percent of the trail system.
- Provide recreation opportunities for nearby communities by locating five percent of the trail system adjacent to communities where practical.
- Upgrade or construct some trails to better accommodate mountain bike single-track use.
- Close and decommission approximately ten miles of user-created routes annually.
- Provide five additional non-motorized settings readily available to non-motorized winter recreationists distributed across the southern half of the Forest.
- Implement engineering, education, and enforcement actions to manage the appropriate use on the appropriate trail.

Access and maintenance – We propose to refine the Forest's road system size and composition to enable an adequately maintained system. We would prioritize annual road maintenance to meet access needs.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

The Forest would continue to maintain, build, reconstruct, and construct roads and trails; as well as decommissioning roads and trails. These actions often involve use of heavy equipment, or hand tools, moving and contouring soil and rock; clearing vegetation; installing/removing culverts and bridges and other drainage structures; and applying native materials or other materials such as paving.



LIVESTOCK GRAZING

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 mandates that national forests are administered for a variety of uses including livestock grazing.

Livestock grazing is authorized through a permit system that allocates forage for grazing. The permits authorize the number of livestock by forage quantity and availability along with condition of an allotment area, including a desirable rangeland resource condition based on species composition and resource concerns. Allotment management plans provide site-specific details for management of the resource and identify mitigation measures needed to reduce identified impacts in order to meet or move toward management objectives.

Ranchers often supplement the forage base on private lands with range allotments on national forest land. Habitat and forage tend to be more suitable for cattle grazing than sheep on national forest lands.

Although livestock grazing on National Forest System lands has decreased since the early 1900s, the ranching industry remains an important part of the local community culture and economy. Local ranchers graze cattle on the rangelands and forested ranges of the national forests during late spring, summer, and early fall. Public land grazing is often an integral component of overall ranch operations.

Livestock grazing is a locally important industry in northeastern Washington. In 1994, the Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests provided approximately 90 percent (about 98,000 AUMs) of the total grazed forage in Washington's national forests. In 2002, this percentage was up to 93 percent (almost 80,000 AUMs) (Ridlington 2004). Even though the total contribution has declined in terms of AUMs, the three Forests remain contributors toward meeting the Washington demand for grazed forage.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Livestock grazing on National Forest System lands will continue to be managed through a permit system that identifies allotments and specific conditions for use of the allotments. The revised forest plan will provide overall guidance for grazing, with allotment management plans providing specific guidance for each allotment. Recreational grazing (an activity associated with the recreational use of pack and saddle stock such as horses, mules, llamas, and goats) will continue. Desired conditions for managing livestock grazing would include the following.

Plant community structure and diversity - The desired structure and diversity of herbaceous and woody plant communities is maintained or enhanced through proper livestock management practices. Native plant species dominate plant communities--including highly palatable forage species. Impacts to nutrient cycling are minimal.

Economic and social contributions - Rangelands and forestlands provide forage for use by both livestock and wildlife. Grazing continues to be a viable use of vegetation on the Forest. Forage for livestock on lands identified as suited for this use provides animal products and economic diversity, while contributing to open space, cultural values, and a traditional life style. Allotments are generally grazed on an annual basis. Allotments are closed that have been vacant for a long period. Allotments are managed primarily for livestock grazing, vegetative management, plant and wildlife habitat, scenic values, and dispersed recreation. A viable level of forage, consistent with sustaining other resource desired conditions, is available for use under a grazing permit system. Riparian and upland areas within allotments reflect desired ecological conditions.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Allotment management plans will continue to be developed to design specific criteria for management of the livestock. The allotment management plans will specify the number of livestock, grazing season, allowable forage utilization, range improvements such as fencing needs and repair, maintaining watering facilities, treating invasive weeds; grazing rotation, and other allotment specific objectives.

RECREATION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Note that guidance for managing the recreational setting is interwoven throughout this document, including in the sections for access, and the descriptions of the various management areas.

Situated on the east slope of the Cascade Range, the Forest offers the largest single recreation venue, with more visitation than any other national forest in Washington State. The warm dry summers and snowy winters draw a large volume of use from the densely populated Puget Sound area. The Forest also offers a backyard playground to numerous small cities and rural towns. Through National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) we know how much recreational use each Forest receives and how many people participate in the various recreational activities. NVUM studies, completed separately for the Okanogan and the Wenatchee portions of the national forest, show distinct differences in both the level of use and types of use.

Okanogan portion

The Forest offers a wide range of recreational settings ranging from the alpine summits of the North Cascades to the shrub steppe of the Okanogan Highlands. The eastern portion of the Forest (Tonasket Ranger District) offers small campgrounds, dispersed camping, and several trail systems. National forest recreational opportunities complement those found on nearby state lands. The national forest setting is integral to the economy of small communities, such as the town of Conconully promoting itself as a snowmobile destination in winter, and an OHV mixed use destination in summer.

Trail-based recreational use, a major attraction to the Forest, is primarily accessed from the Methow Valley. The network of groomed Nordic trails is the second largest in the nation and attracts regional resort-based use. Horseback riding, which occurs primarily in the Pasayten Wilderness and Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, is a regionally significant activity. The Sawtooth backcountry is one of few subalpine motorcycle trail systems in the state. The Methow Valley area also has a high concentration of trails that appeal to mountain bikers. One small downhill ski area serves the local communities.

The congressionally designated North Cascades Scenic Highway provides a breathtaking setting with heavy visitation on trails and in campgrounds much of which is in conjunction with visitation to the adjacent Ross Lake National Recreation Area and North Cascades National Park. In the winter, the area offers some of the best backcountry skiing in the Pacific Northwest. The Chewuch and Twisp Rivers also provide a high concentration of campgrounds and dispersed sites with easy access to trailheads.

Based on 2005 NVUM sampling, total Forest visitors were estimated to be 397,000 visitors, including 59,610 estimated wilderness visitors. The total value of these visits is estimated to be $22,900,684. Taken as whole, day users represent 37 percent of the total use, whereas overnight

users represent 63 percent of total use. Of the visitors sampled, 34 percent of the total Forest use is local (live within 50 miles of where they recreate), whereas 66 percent of the use is non-local. This split differs significantly from national data, where 60 percent of the use is local. The large percentage of non-local use is primarily from the greater Puget Sound area and northwestern Washington, which has a much larger population base than rural Okanogan County. Many visitors include both the Okanogan National Forest and North Cascades National Park in the same trip, resulting in an unusually high incidence of out-of-state visitors. Of the overnight visitors to the Okanogan National Forest, 55 percent camp on national forest and 27.5 percent use local lodging, a very high percentage compared to the 6.8 percent that use lodging on the Wenatchee National Forest.

The six top primary activities engaged in by visitors sampled in 2005 included—

- hiking and walking (29.7 percent totaling 117,909 visits)
- fishing (11 percent totaling 43,670 visits)
- cross-country skiing (10.5 percent totaling 41,685 visits)
- horseback riding (8.7 percent totaling 34,539 visits)
- relaxing (7.9 percent totaling 31,363 visits)
- viewing wildlife (6.2 percent totaling 24,614 visits)

Other popular primary recreational activities (representing one percent or more of the use by primary activity) include in descending order: gathering forest products, driving for pleasure, non-motorized water activities, and downhill skiing. Other activities sampled represent less than one percent of the total use.

Winter use sampling of the Okanogan National Forest was affected by a very low snow year in 2005. Developed recreation sites remained closed most of the season and dispersed winter recreation use was observed to be much lower.

Overall use of this northern portion of the Forest is much lower than the southern districts. This portion of the Forest generally has the capacity for absorbing more use in its existing facilities, although crowding does occur in some locations such as the busy North Cascades Scenic Highway.

Wenatchee portion

The Wenatchee National Forest is relatively large and offers many different environments in which to recreate ranging from alpine summits to arid shrub steppe. Portions of the Forest are interspersed with checkerboard private lands reflecting the establishment of railroads in the 1800s. Most of the ranger district administrative units have large, glacially carved lakes and extensive river systems that are magnets for recreational use. Like other Forests, each district offers developed campgrounds and opportunities for dispersed camping. Most districts have downhill ski areas. Four scenic byways and the nearby Mt. Rainier National Park increase visitation while Interstate 90 allows residents of the greater Seattle area to reach the Forest in just over an hour's drive.

Districts have extensive trail systems inside the six wilderness areas and outside the wilderness. The largest OHV trail systems in the state are on this portion of the forest, including some of the best four wheel drive trails. Mixed use of ATVs and motorcycles on road systems is limited, but an expansion of this opportunity is currently being considered through the travel management process. Groomed snowmobile trail systems can be found on all districts with an especially high concentration of Sno-Parks along the I-90 corridor. Most districts offer groomed Nordic trail systems.

Total Forest visitors in 2005 were estimated to be 2,130,800, of which 129,900 were estimated wilderness visitors. Recreational use of national forest contributes 154 million dollars annually to local economies. Day users represent 57 percent of the total use, whereas overnight users represent 43 percent of total use. Of the visitors sampled, 41 percent of the total Forest use was local and 59 percent of the use was non-local. The large percentage of non-local use is primarily from the greater Puget Sound area, which has a much larger population base than the primarily rural counties of the Wenatchee National Forest.

The six top primary activities engaged in by visitors sampled in 2005 included—

- hunting (22.7 percent totaling 483,692 visits)
- snowmobiling (13.9 percent totaling 296,181 visits)
- hiking and walking (11.7 percent totaling 249,304 visits)
- developed camping (8.9 percent totaling 189,641 visits)
- backpacking (6.9 percent totaling 147,025 visits)
- viewing natural features (6.3 percent totaling 134,240 visits)

Other popular primary recreational activities (representing one percent or more of the use by primary activity) include in descending order: relaxing, gathering forest products, viewing wildlife, driving for pleasure, fishing, non-motorized water activities, downhill skiing, and cross-country skiing. Other activities sampled represent less than one percent of the total use.

At a national scale, the Okanogan-Wenatchee provides for over ten percent of the total national backpacking use due to large wildernesses with extensive trail systems combined with fine weather.

Several factors were identified that skew the Wenatchee National Forest NVUM results. Most of the ski area use is not reflected due to the ski areas straddling forest boundaries. In addition, 2005 was a very low snow year with ski areas closed most of the season. Large fires reduced use of two ranger districts. Sampling locations for horseback riding did not include several riding stables that offer day rides onto the national forest. These venues typically accommodate thousands of guests annually. Similarly, the protocol does not sample rock climbing which is a regionally significant activity on portions of the Forest.

Considering the already relatively high use of the Wenatchee portion of the Forest, crowding is an issue, especially at those venues closest to the Puget Sound area. These pressures are projected to grow substantially into the future and will especially be influenced by projected population growth of the Puget Sound area. Sno-Parks are generally full to overflowing. Demand for snowmobiling

opportunities is projected to more than triple by 2050. Many destinations are currently not meeting the demand for developed and dispersed campsites and unacceptable recreational impacts are likely to increase. Many trails are considered high use, where parking lots do not provide adequate capacity. Hiking use is projected to increase by 78 percent. At 0.6 percent, OHV use represents a much smaller percent of use, but some of the trail systems (like the Manastash and Little Naches) are among the most popular and crowded in the state. Similarly, parking is a limiting factor for downhill ski areas, where demand is projected to increase by 138 percent.

Some portions of the Forest receive substantially less visitation, due to remoteness or lack of the amenities visitors are seeking, and thus have more capacity.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

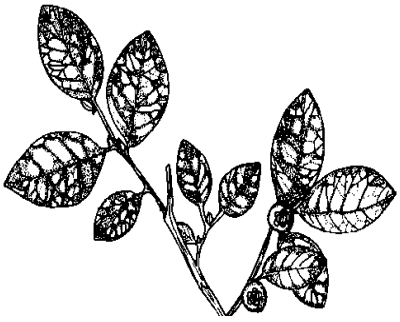
The Forest will continue to provide recreational access on National Forest System lands and a wide range of recreational opportunities will continue.

The goal for recreation settings and experiences would include providing a spectrum of high quality, nature-based outdoor recreational settings where visitors access the forest, including access to the biological, geological, scenic, cultural, and experiential resources of the Forest. Where the visitor's outdoor recreational experience involves few conflicts with other users, access is available for a broad range of dispersed recreation activities such as dispersed camping, rock climbing, boating, mushroom and berry picking, hunting, and fishing and these experiences are offered in an environmentally sound manner, are within budget limits, and contribute to the local economy.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Recreation management actions include those that are associated with managing visitor impacts construction and maintenance of facilities and trails, and providing a positive visitor experience. These may include trail construction, maintenance, or relocation; designating or limiting uses in areas; and constructing facilities such as picnic areas, parking areas, or trailheads, water access points, and installing toilets.

RENEWABLE FOREST PRODUCTS



BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Forest products are those that are collected from the national forest for commercial, personal, Native American tribal, educational, and/or scientific purposes. This section refers to two categories of forest products; those referred to as special forest products as defined by FSH 2409.18-80, 2008; and those considered merchantable wood products.

Examples of special forest products can include but are not limited to bark, berries, boughs, bryophytes, bulbs, burls, Christmas trees, cones, ferns, firewood, forbs, fungi (including mushrooms), grasses, mosses, nuts, pine straw, roots, sedges, seeds, transplants, tree sap, wildflowers, fence material, mine props, posts and poles, shingle and shake bolts, and rails. Examples of merchantable wood products can include, but are not limited to saw timber, pulpwood, non-saw log material removed in log form, biomass and other wood fiber products.

Authorization for the removal of renewable forest products are generally covered under a permit system (both charge and free use), commercial contracts (e.g. timber sale contracts), or stewardship and service contracts (e.g. biomass removal of thinning slash or fuels treatment residue).

Special Forest Products

Harvesting of special forest products (SFPs) is widespread throughout the United States. People from diverse income levels, age groups, and cultural backgrounds harvest SFPs for household subsistence, maintaining cultural and family traditions, obtaining spiritual fulfillment, maintaining physical and emotional well-being, scientific learning, and earning income. Many SFPs serve as raw materials for industries ranging from large-scale floral greens suppliers and pharmaceutical companies to microenterprises centered round basket making, woodcarving, medicinal plant harvesting and processing, and a variety of other activities.

Estimating the contribution of special forest products to the regional economy is difficult owing to the lack of broad-based systems for tracking the combined value of the hundreds of products that make up the various SFP industries. A 1995 estimate showed the wild mushroom industry in 1992 contributed $41.2 million and the floral greens industry in 1994 contributed $106.8 million to just the Pacific Northwest economy. Aside from economic value, many SFPs have cultural heritage, spiritual, and social value.

Firewood, Christmas trees, and mushrooms are among the most sought after SFPs on the Forest as well as other items ranging from boughs to plants. Public interest in special forest products continues to grow with population increase adjacent to the Forest, changes in social values, and changes in the economic value of individual products such as mushrooms. Nationally, the Forest

Service has updated the agency guidance for SFP with the 2001 National Strategy for Special Forest Products and updates to the Forest Service directives system.

Merchantable wood products

Merchantable wood products are tracked using the amount of product sold per year. Over the last ten years, the Forest has sold, on average, the amount shown in table 8. The current forest plans predicted higher amounts would be sold. Resource concerns, funding levels, and market factors all affected attainment of the predicted amounts calculated in the late 1980s. The table summarizes the average annual timber volume production in million board feet, or MMBF (one board foot is represented by a board that is one foot long, one foot wide, and one inch thick).

Table 8—Current level of average annual timber sale quantity

Average amount sold over last 10 years (MMBF) 2000-2010	Average amount sold over last 4 years (MMBF) 2007-2010
51.5	48.8

While the U.S. demand for timber remains relatively high and is expected to increase in the future (USDA FS 2000), timber harvests from 1990 to 2002 in Washington have declined by 39 percent (Washington State Department of Natural Resources 2004). United States lumber markets have relied increasingly on foreign imports, such as from Canada, to help offset declining timber harvests in the state. Softwood lumber imports into the Seattle Customs District from 1992 to 2002 have increased by 11 percent (Warren 2004), while inflation adjusted wholesale prices for Douglas-fir 2x4s have dropped by 33 percent (Warren 2004).

Almost two-thirds, or 15 million acres, of all Washington forestlands are publicly owned with the Forest Service managing 9.2 million of these acres. Due largely to a change in management emphasis, commercial timber harvests on Washington's national forests have declined by 84 percent during the last decade (Washington State Department of Natural Resources 2004). In 2002, the Forest Service accounted for about two percent of the state's total harvest. Harvests from all eastern Washington national forest lands produced 63,979 thousand board feet (MBF) in 2002. The Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests accounted for 87 percent, or 55,555 MBF of this total; down from 236,627 MBF harvested in 1990. This downward trend had stabilized in 1998 through the mid-2000s.

The recent economic downturn affected housing markets, which directly influences timber markets. Long-term impacts to national forest timber harvests of the economic downturn are

unclear. Timber outputs from the Forest provide economic benefits to eastern Washington communities by contributing to the wood processing industry. However, many of the lumber mills adjacent to the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. have closed. The economic outlook for the local wood processing industry is increasingly more uncertain with an international market place affecting demand and pricing of national forest wood products. Further reductions in the wood processing infrastructure affect attainment of Forest ecological goals.

Biomass is an emerging wood product. The state of Washington is currently evaluating the availability of forest biomass on a statewide basis. This includes identifying current uses, current infrastructure that utilizes the material, and an estimation of how much material may be available into the future. It is not known at this time if there might be funding or tax incentives to develop biomass utilization.

In establishing resilient ecosystems under ecological restoration principles, timber harvest will be used as tool of active management to achieve desired conditions. The amount of timber harvested will depend on desired conditions that include landscape levels of specific structural elements (young, mid, mature, and old forest), species composition, spatial patterning (clumps, gaps, complex patches), and ecological process (ex: fire, insects and disease, competition, connectivity, biological legacies).

There is a restoration based need to harvest timber and treat forest stands on a larger number of acres than we receive funding for each year. The actual timber outputs vary considerably based on appropriated budgets, timber markets, and proximity to milling infrastructure. The Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. has begun implementing a restoration strategy and is aggressively attempting to expand the restoration "footprint", which, subject to funding levels, is expected to generate timber outputs at the current level through the planning period.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

A shift in focus from commodity production to ecosystem restoration and forest health is current Forest Service policy.

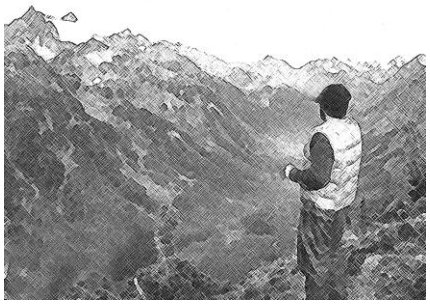
Vegetation management practices would support a variety of resource objectives, ranging from creating diverse wildlife habitats to scenic values to timber products. Implementation of this plan direction would make ecosystems more resilient to disturbance driven by climate change, reduce impacts of insects and diseases, and produce quality wood commodities. The forest is expected to generate timber outputs at the current levels through the planning period.

Implementing the revised forest plan, the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. current levels show (in table 10) that the average amount sold over the past ten years was 51.5 MMBF, of which an average of 48.8 MMBF were sold during the past four years. Implementing the revised forest plan, the Forest would expect to continue to produce at these levels over the planning period.

The revised forest plan proposes to continue to make a variety of renewable forest products of social, spiritual, and economic value reasonably available to the public. These special forest products and merchantable wood products would contribute to economic sustainability.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Producing merchantable wood products usually involves timber harvest operations. Special forest products involve a wide range of activities dependant on the product desired. The scale of operation for special products is often small and uses handwork to collect the product. Handwork can range from hand picking to saw work to collect boughs.



SCENERY

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Viewing natural features is one of the primary activities that draw visitors to national forest. The Forest is known for many outstanding scenic features including breathtaking lakes and rivers, picturesque mountain ranges and geological features, spectacular displays of flowers in the spring and summer, and colorful foliage in the fall. Cultural landscapes are also important such as viewing old homesteads, mining operations, and Civilian Conservation Corps craftsmanship. Roads, trails, waterways, and vista points are the primary avenues for viewing scenery.

Managing the scenic character of the national forest is integral to all Forest activities. In some locations, scenic character has been degraded by past practices and rehabilitation is needed. In other locations, enhancements such as interpretive facilities can improve the experiential setting.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Forest will continue to maintain and enhance scenery with the aim of providing a high quality recreational experience for visitors and contributing to the quality of life of communities whose backdrop is the national forest. Vistas points, scenic pullouts and interpretive sites will continue to give the public access to valued landscapes.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Scenery projects often use vegetation treatments, such as timber harvest or planned ignition fire, to enhance and maintain scenery. Permanent openings in the vegetation may be created to maintain vistas. Viewing opportunities may be developed using trails, pullouts on roads, and interpretive installations. New building construction will employ the appropriate architectural style, and existing buildings may be retrofitted to provide a more harmonious appearance in the national forest landscapes.

Proposed Actions for Management Areas

This section is where you will find more information about the proposed management areas, including riparian management areas, administrative sites, motorized and non-motorized backcountry areas, active restoration areas, and special areas such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, special interest areas, scenic byways, and nationally designated trails.

Management Area Map – Look to the management area map to locate these management areas.

Please review and respond to the proposed actions

Background To All Management Area Proposed Actions

Management areas are broadly described areas where general management intent is similar. The purpose of management areas is to provide consistent guidance for similar portions of National Forest System lands when implementing or continuing management activities. Forest-wide plan direction, described earlier in the proposed action, applies within management areas. Some management areas, such as riparian management areas, overlap or overlay other management areas.

The Forest currently has a hodge-podge of overlapping management areas and inconsistent management areas along the administrative boundary between Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests, as well as along the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. The revised forest plan offers an opportunity to reduce the administrative complexity by identifying a consistent set of management areas for the Forests.

New proposals for special interest areas, preliminary wilderness recommendations, scenic byways, and national trail designations create new management areas. Realigned management areas will clean up the mismatch of land allocations along administrative boundaries. Some management areas in the current forest plans no longer represent current ecological and social conditions across the Forests.

The 1994 Northwest Forest Plan amendment overlaid management areas, including late successional reserves, on top of the original 1989/90 land allocations decided by the current forest plans. New science around providing habitat for northern spotted owls has shown that a static reserve system does not respond to the dynamic disturbance processes (especially fire) on the east

side of the Cascade Range. The current forest plans use a static reserve system and this would be replaced with a whole-landscape approach. The revised forest plan will provide habitat

conditions for the northern spotted owl that contribute to the recovery of the species through a combination of management areas and plan components (see more details in the wildlife section).

Congress designates some management areas (such as wilderness and national scenic trails) and those boundaries cannot be changed in a plan revision process. Other management areas, such as existing Research Natural Areas are functioning well and there is no need to recommend a change in the boundary or allocation.

Management areas in the revised forest plan will be linked to physical, biological, and social conditions on the ground. These land allocations need to be applied across the landscape to achieve desired conditions that take into account management practices and intensities.

The public has shown great interest in where timber harvest, road building, and summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use may be authorized. For each management area described, we have included information on whether these activities or uses could be authorized in that area. These are not the only uses that could be found in these areas, we have highlighted the ones of interest to the public.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR ALL MANAGEMENT AREAS

The following is the list of proposed management areas for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Each of these areas is described below along with the proposed management actions for each of the areas.

- Active Restoration 2
- Active Restoration 3
- Administrative and Recreation Sites
- Backcountry
- Backcountry Motorized
- Experimental Forest
- National Scenic Area
- Nationally Designated Trails
- Research Natural Areas
- Riparian
- Scenic Byways
- Snoqualmie Pass Adaptive Management Area
- Special Interest Areas
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness – Congressionally Designated

- Wilderness – Preliminary Administratively Recommended
- Wilderness Study Area

Management areas designated by Congress have boundaries set that only Congress may change. These are the National Scenic Area, National Scenic Trail locations, Congressionally Designated Wilderness, and the Wilderness Study Area. The location and configuration of these areas does not change with plan revision, as the deciding official (the Regional Forester) does not have the authority to make changes. Preliminary Administratively Recommended Wilderness, and Wild and Scenic Rivers are recommendations until Congress makes a final designation. National Scenic Byways are designated by the Secretary of Transportation and Forest Service byways are recommended by the Chief of the Forest Service. The plan revision will make no recommendation for changes to these byways.

Management areas designated by the Chief of the Forest Service include Experimental Forests and National Recreation Trails. While the Regional Forester may recommend changes to these boundaries, the plan revision does not intend to make any changes. The remaining management area locations and configurations may be decided by the Regional Forester through plan revision. Plan revision looked to public comments about providing ranges of recreation settings and opportunities, about contributing aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats; and continuing to contribute goods and services to locate and configure management areas. Also considered were legal and regulatory requirements that include providing specific habitat conditions for aquatic, plant and wildlife species, or conserving ecological conditions for the future. Existing uses and activities are considered with the management area allocation usually continuing existing uses where possible.

ACTIVE RESTORATION 2

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Spatially, this management area will be defined by roaded landscapes in areas with important plant and wildlife habitats (including grizzly bear and lynx habitats) or key watersheds that were not already allocated to other management areas.

Desired habitat conditions for aquatic, plant, and wildlife species are found in these areas and they limit the size of the road system. A road density of two miles per square mile inherently limits management activities and human uses. Types of uses vary, but are generally less intensive than found in the Active Restoration 3 and more intensive than found in the Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized management areas. The landscape is natural appearing, but in comparison to the Backcountry and Backcountry Motorized management areas, there can be areas of intensive, concentrated management activity or facilities. The area generally contributes to the roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management, summer off-highway vehicle use where designated, and winter motorized use could continue to be authorized in Active Restoration 2 Management Areas.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The desired conditions for Active Restoration 2 Management Area would include the following.

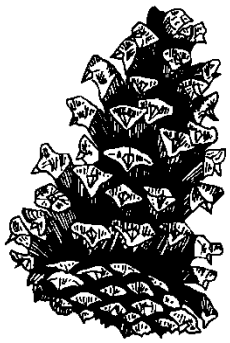
Vegetation – The landscape is natural appearing and contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The vegetation is maintained through

ecological processes, as well as management activities. While the landscape is predominantly natural appearing, there are some locations where the vegetation composition, structure, or pattern is altered to provide a recreational setting such as openings maintained for scenic views.

Habitat - These areas contribute important habitat for aquatic, plant and wildlife species that benefit from areas with relative low road density. These areas contribute to opportunities for recreation, and road-based plant and wildlife viewing.

Recreation setting and activities - The area supplies a variety of dispersed or developed summer and winter recreational activities that are motorized and non-motorized. Seasonal use restrictions occur for the purpose of resource protection or recreation management. Recreational use is generally dispersed. Recreational developments, such as campgrounds and trailheads, are imbedded within the area, but are their own separate management area. Human-caused changes from management actions related to recreation are generally limited in scale, can be visually evident, and reflect a roaded natural recreational opportunity setting.

Travel ways and Roads - This area has Forest Service system and other authorized roads. A wide spectrum of travel way types are present, ranging from maintenance level 1 through 5 roads (primitive roads to highways) to trails that serve as recreational features themselves. Roads are often gated, closed by barricade, or seasonally restricted for resource protection or recreation management reasons. Road densities vary considerably across the management area, but are limited to an average of 2 miles per square mile. This would be measured at the 5th field watershed scale, where all Active Restoration 2 management area acres are included in the measurement of road density.



ACTIVE RESTORATION 3

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Spatially this area includes all areas in roaded landscapes not already included in another management area.

This area contributes habitat for plant, aquatic, and wildlife species. Types of uses vary and can be more intensive than found in the Active Restoration 2 Management Area. The road density of three miles per square mile inherently limits management activities and human uses.

The landscape is natural appearing, but in comparison to Active Restoration 2, there can be areas of intensive, concentrated management activity or facilities. The area generally contributes to the roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management, summer off-highway vehicle use where designated, and winter motorized use could continue to be authorized in Active Restoration 2 Management Areas.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The desired conditions for Active Restoration 3 Management Area would include the following.

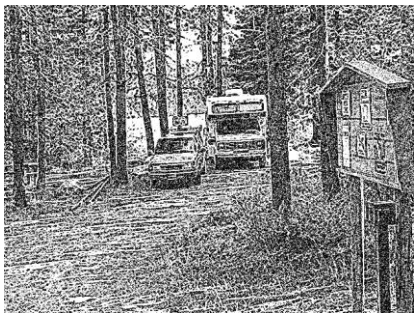
Vegetation - The landscape is natural appearing and contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The vegetation is maintained through ecological processes and management activities. While the landscape is natural appearing, there are locations that have a vegetation composition, structure, or pattern that is altered to provide a recreational setting such as openings maintained for scenic views; or other desired conditions, such as vegetation fuel conditions adjacent to an urban interface.

Habitat - These areas contribute habitat for aquatic, plant and wildlife species. These areas contribute to opportunities for recreational and road-based plant and wildlife viewing.

Recreation Setting and Activities - The area supplies a variety of dispersed or developed summer and winter recreational activities that are motorized and non-motorized. Seasonal use restrictions occur for the purpose of resource protection or recreation management. Recreational use is generally dispersed. Recreational developments, such as campgrounds and trailheads, are imbedded within the area, but are their own separate management area. Human-caused changes from management actions related to recreation occur, are visually evident, and reflect a roaded natural recreational opportunity setting.

Travel ways and Roads - This area has National Forest System roads and other authorized roads. A wide spectrum of travel way types are present, ranging from maintenance level 1

through 5 roads (primitive roads to highways) to trails that serve as recreational features themselves. Roads may be gated, closed by barricade, or seasonally restricted for resource protection or recreation management reasons. Road densities vary considerably across the management area, but are limited to an average of 3 miles per square mile. This would be measured at the 5th field watershed scale, where all Active Restoration 3 management area acres are included in the measurement of road density.



ADMINISTRATIVE AND RECREATION SITES

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

This management direction applies to those sites listed as administrative or recreation sites in the Forest's I-WEB, Infra (infrastructure) database.

Administrative sites listed in Infra can include, but are not limited to, district offices/compounds, remote work centers, warehouse sites, and administrative residence sites. Recreation sites listed in Infra can include, but are not limited to, campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, Sno-Parks, alpine ski areas, recreation residence tracts, interpretive sites, and boating sites.

Both administrative and recreation sites management area boundaries are defined by the footprint of the site plus a 300-foot area extending beyond the footprint. This accommodates management activities necessary for the safe use and occupancy of the site. When a special use authorization defines the site, the special use permit boundary determines the boundary of the management area.

Note that while all Forest-wide plan components apply to these areas, certain plan components for vegetative systems, aquatic and riparian systems, wildlife and plant habitats, riparian management areas, and soils are secondary to the human use and occupancy needs of the area.

These management areas are generally small in scale and occur as a place or feature on the landscape. An exception can be ski areas, which can cover substantial acreage in comparison to other developed recreation sites.

A variety of activities may continue to be authorized. The following uses are of particular interest to the public.

In the plan revision, vegetation management could continue *to be authorized* in Administrative and Recreation Sites management areas.

The following selected activities would generally *not be authorized* in Administrative and Recreation Sites Management Areas:

- Summer off-highway vehicle use (unless associated with the recreation site design, such as an OHV campground proximate to OHV trail systems).

- Winter motorized use (unless associated with the site, such as a Sno-Park for snowmobiles).

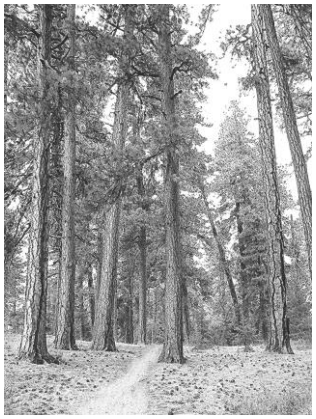
PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Forest will continue to have administrative and developed recreation sites such as campgrounds. There are no programmatic changes proposed to current specific management of existing sites, other than identifying these as management areas to clarify the application of forest-wide management direction to these sites.

The Forest could propose objectives, such as additional large group sites or increasing parking capacity at Sno-Parks in response to increased demand. The Forest is also proposing to upgrade 15 dispersed recreation sites or developed facilities to meet current design standards (such as improving accessibility and providing appropriate turning radii) and to provide for shifting demographic trends.

TOOLS TO EXPECT

Building and maintenance of facilities are common actions in administrative and recreation sites. Roads and buildings may be constructed, fences and other barriers installed, vegetation managed through pruning or cutting trees; landscaping around buildings; and service infrastructure such as water/sewer lines and power lines could be present. Some sites may be redesigned to function better, such as updating water and wastewater systems, relocating flood-prone areas, addressing accessibility needs, or increasing capacity where approporiate.



BACKCOUNTRY

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

This section provides management direction for Backcountry management area. The only difference between this area and Backcountry Motorized management area is suitability for non-motorized and motorized recreation.

Spatially this area overlaps some key watersheds, has unroaded landscapes, and includes the 2001 Inventoried Roadless Areas and the potential wilderness areas identified in the plan revision wilderness evaluation process. A few smaller unroaded areas are also included, as well as several places where previous decisions have slated removing system roads.

This area is unroaded and may have some evidence of past roads no longer authorized. This management area contributes habitat conditions for species that benefit from an unroaded

landscape. A high quality, semi-primitive recreational experience for both summer and winter use may be found in this management area. Visitors who engage in non-motorized recreational activities that are not authorized in wilderness would find a semi-primitive recreation setting in this area.

The proposed action does not include site-specific changes to where winter motorized uses are allowed.

A variety of activities may continue to be authorized. The following uses are of particular interest to the public.

In the plan revision, the following activities *could continue to be authorized*:

- Vegetation management activities
- Summer non-motorized recreational activities – can include foot, horse, and mechanized (e.g. mountain bikes) modes of travel

The following selected activities *would not be authorized*:

- Summer off-highway vehicle use

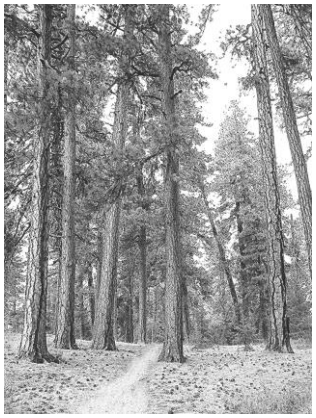
PROPOSED ACTIONS

The desired conditions for Backcountry Management Areas would include the following.

Vegetation - The landscape is natural appearing. It contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The vegetation is maintained through ecological processes, as well as management activities. While the landscape is predominantly natural appearing, a few locations have a vegetation composition, structure, or pattern that is altered to contribute to the recreational setting such as openings maintained for scenic views.

Habitat - These areas contribute important source habitat and connectivity between source habitats for wildlife species that benefit from areas of relative low human use, such as grizzly bears and wolverines. The areas contribute aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitat conditions for species that benefit from an unroaded landscape.

Activities - These areas supply a variety of dispersed summer and winter recreational activities in an unroaded setting. Seasonal use restrictions occur for the purpose of resource protection or recreation management. Recreational use is generally dispersed and major recreation developments are not found. Human-caused changes from management actions related to recreation are limited in scale, generally not visually evident, and reflect a semi-primitive recreational opportunity setting.



BACKCOUNTRY MOTORIZED

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

This section provides management direction for Backcountry Motorized. The only difference between this area and Backcountry Non-motorized management area is suitability for non-motorized and motorized recreation.

Spatially these areas overlap some key watersheds, are unroaded landscapes, and include the 2001 Inventoried Roadless Areas and the potential wilderness areas identified in the plan revision wilderness evaluation process. A few smaller unroaded areas are also included, as well as several places where previous decisions have slated removing system roads.

These areas are unroaded and may have some evidence of past roads no longer authorized. They contribute habitat conditions for species that benefit from an unroaded landscape. A high quality, semi-primitive recreational experience for both summer and winter use may be found in this management area. Visitors who engage in non-motorized and motorized recreational activities that are not authorized in wilderness would find a semi-primitive recreation setting in this area.

The proposed action does not include site-specific changes to where winter motorized uses are allowed.

A variety of activities may continue to be authorized. The following uses are of particular interest to the public.

In the plan revision, the following activities *could be* authorized:

- Vegetation management activities
- Summer off-highway vehicle use where designated

PROPOSED ACTIONS

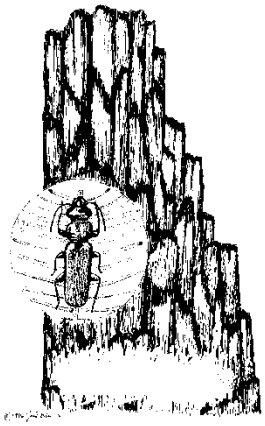
The desired conditions for Backcountry Motorized Management Areas would include the following.

Vegetation - The landscape is natural appearing. It contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The vegetation is maintained through ecological processes, as well as management activities. While the landscape is predominantly natural appearing, a few locations have a vegetation composition, structure, or pattern that is altered to contribute to the recreational setting such as openings maintained for scenic views.

Habitat - These areas contribute important source habitat and connectivity between source habitats for wildlife species that benefit from areas of relative low human use, such as grizzly

bears and wolverines. The areas contribute aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitat conditions for species that benefit from an unroaded landscape.

Activities - These areas supply a variety of dispersed summer and winter recreational activities in an unroaded setting. Seasonal use restrictions occur for the purpose of resource protection or recreation management. Recreational use is generally dispersed and major recreation developments are not found. Human-caused changes from management actions related to recreation are limited in scale, generally not visually evident, and reflect a semi-primitive recreational opportunity setting.



EXPERIMENTAL FOREST

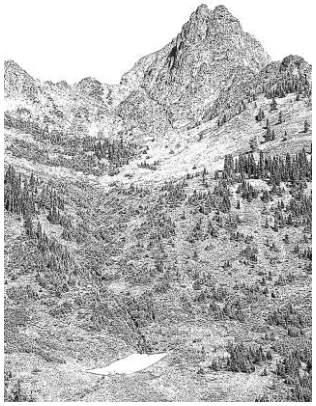
BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Entiat Experimental Forest was proposed in 1957 and established January 6, 1971. The 4,770-acre experimental forest is part of a national network of experimental forests and ranges providing opportunities for the Forest Service to do research and development, develop partnerships in academic research, and conduct long-term research. Specifically, this experimental forest provides an opportunity to study the effects of disturbances (mainly fire) and post-disturbance recovery on watershed hydrology, soils, and vegetation.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities could continue to be authorized, including summer off-highway use where designated and winter motorized use. Vegetation management activities could be authorized when in conjunction with a research objective.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

There are no proposed changes to the current management of the area. Activities are coordinated to be compatible with research needs.



National Scenic Area

Background to the Proposed Actions

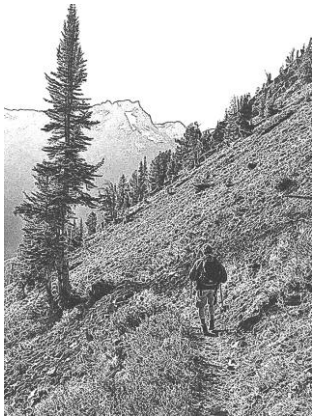
National Scenic Areas are statutorily designated areas that contain outstanding scenic characteristics, recreational values, and geological, ecological, and cultural resources. There is one national scenic area on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Congress designated the 87,700-acre North Cascades Scenic Highway in 1984 for its remarkable scenic values and representation of a unique aesthetic travel way through the North Cascade Range.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management and winter motorized use could continue to be authorized. Summer off-highway vehicle use would not be authorized.

Proposed Actions

This National Scenic Area would continue to offer a high-quality scenic and recreational setting. Scenic values of the area, such as rocky peaks and glacial valleys; low to high elevation vegetation; and aquatic, plant, and wildlife viewing; are preserved. Developments, such as campgrounds and picnic areas, roads, and trails provide access to the area.

There are no proposed changes to the current management of this area.



Nationally Designated Trails

Background to the Proposed Actions

These are national scenic trails designated by Congress or recreation trails designated by the Forest Service. National scenic trails are 100 miles or longer, and are continuous, non-motorized routes that provide for the conservation and enjoyment of their nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities. National recreation trails contribute to the variety of outdoor recreation opportunities on the Forest. Congress recently established the new Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, which crosses east and west on the Forest. This plan will provide management direction for that trail within the bounds previously established by Congress, agency directives, and policy for national scenic trails.

In the plan revision, vegetation management activities could continue to be authorized within the trail corridor. Summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use is not authorized on national scenic trails. Summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use may be authorized on specific national recreational trails, depending on the use objective of the trail.

Table 9—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest National Scenic Trails

Trail type	Trail name	Number of miles managed by Forest
National Scenic Trail	Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail	320
	Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail	160
National Recreation Trail	Blue Lake	2.2
	Boulder Cave	0.8
	Cedar Creek	9.6
	Cutthroat Creek	5.5
	Domke Lake	3.0
	Eagle Lake	7.0
	Rainy Lake	0.9
	Silver Falls	1.4
	Washington Pass Overlook	0.2

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The plan would continue to provide management direction that supports the primary purpose of these trails, which is to provide for public use of these trails, interpretation and education about features of the trail, and manage the trails in a manner that does not impair the features of that individual trail. The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail was recently created by Congress and not covered in the current forest plans. The revised forest plan will provide management direction for this trail similar to the existing Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail management. The exception is that mechanized use (bicycles) is proposed as an authorized use for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail except within wilderness.

RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Research Natural Areas (RNA), whether established or proposed, are a part of a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for research and education and/or to maintain biological diversity on National Forest System lands. They are established to provide study and protection of a full range of habitat types and remain in a relatively unaltered condition for non-manipulative research, observation, and study.

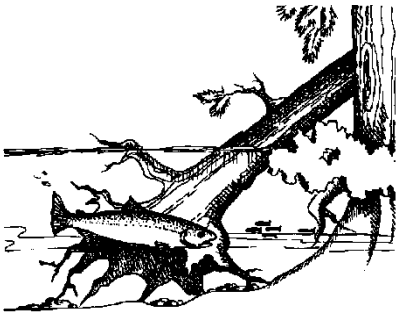
In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management could continue to be authorized for research purposes. Summer off-highway vehicle use and winter motorized use would not be authorized.

Table 10—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Area	Administrative Location (Ranger District)
Cedar Creek	Naches
Chewuch River	Methow Valley/Tonasket
Chiwaukum Creek	Wenatchee River
Drop Creek	Cle Elum
Eldorado Creek	Cle Elum
Fish Lake Bog	Wenatchee River
Icicle /Frosty Creek	Wenatchee River
Maple Mountain	Tonasket
Meeks Table	Naches
Roger Lake	Tonasket
Thompson Clover	Entiat
Wolf Creek	Methow Valley

PROPOSED ACTIONS

There are no proposed changes to the current management of these areas.



RIPARIAN

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Riparian management areas are designated in the current forest plans. The revised forest plan would carry forward this approach with some changes in widths and more information on desired conditions for riparian areas. The current forest plans include riparian direction from the Northwest Forest Plan, the Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and portions of California (PACFISH, USDA and USDI 1995), and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH, USDA Forest Service 1994c and 1995). These approaches have improved riparian management and appear to be maintaining and restoring riparian habitat conditions at the watershed and larger scales. The changes proposed are a refinement of these strategies and replaces the interim strategies.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management, summer off-highway vehicle use where designated and winter motorized use could continue to be authorized in Riparian Management Areas.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Riparian Management Areas will include portions of watersheds where aquatic and riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis and where special management direction applies. Riparian Management Areas will be designated for all permanently flowing streams, lakes, wetlands, seeps, springs and intermittent streams, and unstable sites that may influence these areas.

Following is an example of a desired condition for the Riparian Management Area.

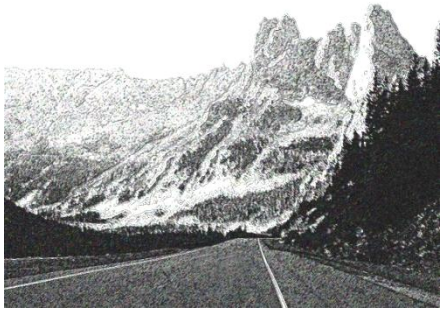
> **Composition** - Riparian Management Areas within any given watershed reflect a natural composition of native flora and fauna and a distribution of physical, chemical, and biological conditions appropriate to natural disturbance regimes affecting the area.

Riparian Management Areas will be used to maintain and restore the riparian structure and function of intermittent and perennial streams, confer benefits to riparian-dependent plant and animal species, enhance habitat conservation for organisms that are dependent on the transition zone between upslope and riparian areas, and contribute to a greater connectivity of the watershed for both riparian and upland species.

The size of the Riparian Management Areas are proposed as shown in table 11.

Table 11—Proposed widths for riparian management areas

RMA Types	Width	Description
Fish-bearing streams	Distance equal to the height of two site-potential trees, or 300-foot slope distance (600 feet total, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest. It is expected that RMA widths along fish-bearing streams will not be less than described here.	RMAs consist of the stream and the area on each side of the stream, extending from the edges of the active stream channel to the top of the inner gorge, or to the outer edges of the 100-year floodplain, or to the outer edges of riparian vegetation.
Permanently flowing non-fish-bearing streams	Distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150-foot slope distance (300 feet total, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest.	
Constructed ponds and reservoirs, and wetlands greater than one acre	Distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150-foot slope distance from the edge of the wetland greater than one acre or the maximum pool elevation of constructed ponds and reservoirs, whichever is greatest.	RMAs consist of the body of water and the area to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, or to the extent of seasonally saturated soil, or to the extent of unstable and potentially unstable areas.
Lakes and natural ponds	Distance equal to the height of two site-potential trees, or 300-foot slope distance, whichever is greatest.	
Seasonally flowing or intermittent streams, wetlands, seeps and springs less than one acre, and unstable and potentially unstable areas		
At a minimum, the width extends from the edges of the stream channel to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 100 feet slope distance, whichever is greatest.		This category applies to features with high variability in size and site-specific characteristics.



SCENIC BYWAYS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Three types of federally designated scenic byways are found on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest: All American Roads and National Scenic Byways (designated by the Secretary of Transportation); and National Forest Scenic Byways (designated by the Forest Service). The state of Washington also designated many of these byways as state scenic byways. Some roads have multiple designations.

A one-half mile strip on either side of the byway centerline defines the scenic byway management area. Management direction applies only to portions of the byway within National Forest System lands.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management and summer off-highway vehicle use could continue to be authorized in Scenic Byway management areas. The proposed action does not include site-specific changes to currently authorized winter motorized uses.

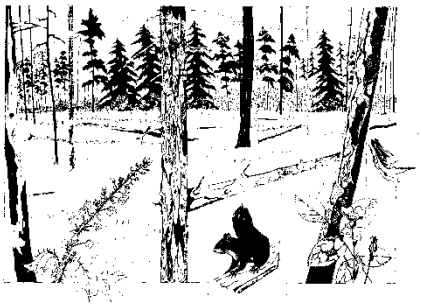
Table 12—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Scenic Byways

Scenic byway name	Scenic byway type	Administrative location (Ranger District
Chinook Scenic Byway	All American Road and National Forest Scenic Byway	Naches
Mountains to Sound Greenway - I-90	National Scenic Byway	Cle Elum
North Cascades Scenic Highway	National Forest Scenic Byway	Methow Valley
Steven T. Mather Memorial Parkway	All American Road and National Forest Scenic Byway	Naches
Stevens Pass Greenway	National Scenic Byway and National Forest Scenic Byway	Wenatchee River
White Pass Scenic Byway	National Scenic Byway and National Forest Scenic Byway	Naches

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Although there are no proposed changes to the current management of these areas, the plan revision would include an objective to improve ten percent of the foreground and middle ground area viewed from the byways over the next 15 years to meet desired landscape character. Priorities for rehabilitation and enhancement of desired landscape character include the White Pass

Scenic Byway, Mountains to Sound Greenway, and the Stevens Pass Greenway. Over the next 15 years, the forest proposes to develop scenic pullouts and interpretive day use sites along the following priority scenic highway corridors: Mountains to Sound Greenway and Stevens Pass Greenway.



SNOQUALMIE PASS ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AREA

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Located on Snoqualmie Pass, mainly on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest with portions on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie N.F., the direction for this area remains unchanged. It was created as part of the April 1994 Northwest Forest Plan decision and serves as a testing ground for the development, demonstration, implementation, and evaluation of innovative management practices and monitoring strategies that integrate ecological and economic values. It is a critical connective link in the north-south movement of organisms (plant and wildlife) in the Cascade Range and provides important habitat for late-successional species.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management, summer off-highway use where designated and winter motorized use could continue to be authorized in the Snoqualmie Pass Adaptive Management Area.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

There are no proposed changes to the current management of the area.

SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are management areas with outstanding special characteristics or unique values. These may be scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, historical, or recreational values. SIAs are intended to highlight areas of interest to the public and may have roads and trails to allow public use. Some SIAs, to protect the feature, may limit access to trails rather than roads.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management and summer off-highway vehicle use in some, but not all SIAs could be authorized.

Below are the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. currently established SIAs.

Table 13—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest established Special Interest Areas

Name	Acres	Status	Purpose
Annette Lake	1,491	Established	Recreational
Beaver Hill (formerly Ponderosa Estates)	50	Established	Botanical
Boulder Cave	5	Established	Zoological/Geological
Fish Lake Run	193	Established	Zoological
Goose Egg Mountain	523	Established	Scenic
Kloochman Rock	308	Established	Scenic
Lake Creek	284	Established	Botanical
Naches Trail	509	Established	Historical
Nason Ridge	13,309	Established	Recreational
Teanaway	67,392	Established	Recreational
The Ponds (formerly Squaw Lake)	268	Established	Zoological
Tiffany	2410	Established	Botanical
Tumwater	11,456	Established	Recreational
Upper Naneum Meadow	711	Established	Zoological

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest proposes adding the SIAs identified in table 14 as a new proposal. The Forest currently has around 98,000 acres in special interest areas.

Table 14—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest proposed Special Interest Areas

Name	Acres	Status	Purpose
Art's Dream	295	New proposal	Botanical
Cash Prairie	60	New proposal	Botanical
Clear Creek	482	New proposal	Botanical
Deep Creek II	50	New proposal	Botanical
Deer Park Springs Complex 1, 2, 3, 4	384	New proposal	Botanical
Giant Helleborine	5	New proposal	Botanical
Swakane Butterfly	15,307	New proposal	Zoological
Wildcat Creek	1901	New proposal	Geological

Following is an example of a desired condition for Special Interest Areas.

Values, interpretation - Special areas highlight features unique or outstanding to the national forest or bioregions. The unique or special values for which these areas were established are preserved. Evidence of human activities, including interpretation and habitation, is consistent with the characteristics for which the area was established. Public use allows for access,

scientific study, interpretation, and education of the specified value of the area in a manner that does not threaten the values for which the individual area was established.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Congress designates wild and scenic rivers as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System under the authority of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (1968). Currently, there are no congressionally designated rivers on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Past planning efforts have identified rivers that could be recommended to Congress for designation and these are grouped into eligible or suitable rivers. Eligible rivers are free flowing and have one or more outstandingly remarkable values of regional or national significance. Suitable rivers are those eligible rivers where protection of the outstandingly remarkable values is more important than other resource benefits and congressional designation is determined to be the best option for protecting the values of the river. Eligible or suitable rivers are managed to preserve their eligibility. The river corridor is generally one-quarter mile from either side of the riverbank. However, protection of outstandingly remarkable values may require encompassing a larger area.

Sections of rivers, not the whole river, are designated as eligible or suitable. The Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. has 18 eligible or suitable river sections, identified in the current forest plan.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management and summer off-highway vehicle use could continue to be authorized in scenic and recreational segments, not in wild segments of wild and scenic rivers. There are no proposed changes to current authorized winter motorized uses.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The plan proposes adding 13 eligible river sections on the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. These are shown in table 15.

Table 15—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest eligible river sections

Proposed for eligible under this plan revision	Drainage/Ranger District (RD)	Outstandingly remarkable value
American River, Rainier Fork	Naches / Naches RD	Scenery
Cedar Creek	Methow RD	Scenery, recreation
Cooper River (tributary to the Cle Elum River)	Yakima / Cle Elum RD	Scenery, recreation, other ecological values
Deep Creek (tributary to the Bumping River)	Bumping River / Naches RD	Scenery, geology, fish, other ecological values
Devils Creek – tributary to Naches River	Naches River / Naches RD	Scenery, recreation, geology, wildlife
Early Winters	Methow RD	Scenery, recreation
Indian Creek	Tieton / Naches RD	Geology, fish, other ecological
Little Naches River (above Pileup Creek)	Naches / Naches RD	Recreation, fish, historic/cultural, other ecological values
Little Wenatchee River (including Lake Creek)	Wenatchee River / Wenatchee River RD	Scenery, recreation, fish, wildlife, other ecological values
Mad River	Entiat / Entiat RD	Scenery, recreation, fish, other ecological values
Nason Creek (above Whitepine Creek)	Wenatchee River / Wenatchee River RD	Scenery, recreation
Raging and Rock Creeks - tributaries to the Chiwawa River	Wenatchee River / Wenatchee River RD	Raging – recreation Rock Creek - fish
Rattlesnake Creek	Naches / Naches RD	Scenery, recreation, geology, fish
Silver Creek (tributary to the Yakima River)	Yakima / Cle Elum RD	Scenery, recreation, wildlife
Tieton River, South Fork (above the high pool level of Rimrock Lake)	Tieton / Naches RD	Scenery, recreation, fish, other ecological values

Following are examples of management direction for the existing and proposed wild and scenic rivers.

Wild, recreational or scenic rivers - Prior to congressional designation, uses continue that do not compromise wild and scenic eligibility. Eligible and suitable rivers and adjacent areas retain the free-flowing characteristics of the river, preserve water quality, and the outstandingly remarkable values for wild, recreational or scenic status. These river segments provide for a diversity of habitats and settings within National Forest System lands.

Vegetation - When compatible with protection of water quality and outstandingly remarkable values, vegetation manipulation may be implemented on recreational and scenic river segments to:

- Protect, or improve habitat for threatened and endangered species or species of conservation concern.
- Provide for scenic improvement or maintenance including the treatment of insects and disease.
- Provide for human safety.
- Provide resilient ecosystems that are resistant to uncharacteristic disturbances and invasive plant species.

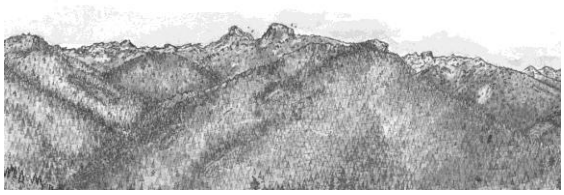
Road construction - Do not authorize new road construction in recreational or scenic river segments unless the purpose is to enhance an outstandingly remarkable value.

To maintain conditions, the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. proposes to do the following:

River Access - Within 15 years, provide improved river access for boating in the locations shown in the table below.

Table 16—River access improvement objective

Location	Improvement
Cooper River	Improve the put-in and a take-out for kayak use of the lower Cooper River
Icicle Creek	Improve a put-in near the Snow Creek trailhead
Wenatchee River	Improve a put-in/take-out near the Tumwater Campground



WILDERNESS – CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Eight Congressionally Designated Wildernesses are within the planning area, all of which cross forest boundaries or adjoin other public lands such as national parks or state lands.

Table 17—Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest congressionally designated wilderness

Congressionally designated wilderness areas	Administrative Location (Ranger District)
Alpine Lakes	Wenatchee River/Cle Elum
Glacier Peak	Chelan/Entiat/Wenatchee River
Goat Rocks	Naches
Henry M. Jackson	Wenatchee River
Lake Chelan-Sawtooth	Chelan/Methow Valley
Norse Peak	Naches
Pasayten	Methow Valley/Tonasket
William O. Douglas	Naches

Wilderness provides diverse settings and a wide variety of primitive recreational opportunities offering outstanding opportunities for solitude. The undeveloped and remote landscapes contribute to the preservation of intact ecosystems and the recovery of listed species such as the Canada lynx and grizzly bear. They contain an array of ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, and historical values that are managed within the context of wilderness.

Prior to wilderness designation, these areas had intensive use from large groups, commercial grazing, and administrative activities, resulting in some large impacts that remain to this day. The current forest plans prescribe a very small campsite footprint, which does not meet the needs of larger groups. Provisional uses, those allowed by the enabling legislation such as the operation of dams, occurs in a number of locations.

Most portions of the wildernesses are in a stable or improving trend relative to protecting wilderness character. However, there are a number of challenges to management.

- Natural processes have been disrupted by activities such as fire suppression, fish stocking, non-native plant diseases, and the spread of weeds.
- A number of areas are easily accessed and receive heavy use. Many of these areas are known for crowding and, in some locations, physical impacts such as a proliferation of campsites are getting worse.
- Use of the internet and global positioning systems is resulting in trail development in formerly pristine locations.
- In some locations, inappropriate or prohibited uses are occurring such as snowmobile trespass across wilderness boundaries.

In the plan revision, a variety of activities including vegetation management, summer and winter motorized uses and mechanized transport *would not* be authorized in Congressionally Designated Wilderness Areas.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Management of wilderness is bounded by law (Wilderness Act), Forest Service regulations, directives, and policy.

The desire for wilderness conditions is to show an improving trend in the qualities that define wilderness character, where wilderness provides areas where ecological processes occur naturally with little to no human influence or intervention, and wilderness visitors experience solitude and risk in primitive surroundings.

The revised forest plan will carry forward much of the current direction for wilderness, including current group size limits, as that direction has provided conditions that are stable or improving.

A proposal of the revised forest plan is to consider a few changes that would enhance the Forest's ability to provide wilderness character or provide constraints on activities specifically provided for by the Wilderness Act. Those proposed changes are provided below.

Site conditions – Monitoring has shown the current standard for managing vegetation loss around campsites does not account for group size limits.

Site density and site conditions (including vegetation loss, tree damage, social trails, and human-caused erosion) would be stable or improving at the scale of a destination area and at the sub-watershed scale (12th field HUC) within the wilderness boundaries.

Most sites would be maintained at a relatively small size that can accommodate one to three small tents or one large tent. A limited system of large group campsites (not to exceed 5 percent of the total sites in a given wilderness) would be maintained to accommodate the needs of larger groups up to the group size limit and these sites are generally out of view of focal areas such as where trails first arrive at a destination. Large group sites would not be allowed in pristine wilderness resource spectrum (WRS) zones. Excessively large or visually obtrusive impacts would be reduced through site maintenance.

Table 18—Desired site conditions for Congressionally Designated Wilderness

Indicator	Wilderness Resource Spectrum			
	Transition	Semi-Primitive	Primitive	Pristine
Maximum vegetation loss on 95% of sites	1,000 (square feet)	1,000	1,000	400
Maximum campsites that would be intervisible or interaudible (in a speaking voice) if occupied	6	3	2	1
Firewood availability	Dead and downed wood up to 8 inches in diameter may be used. Attached branches, live vegetation, and snags should not be harvested. Firewood consumption should not exceed one season's accumulation of dead and downed wood.			Evidence of firewood gathering should be imperceptible.

Visitor use: lakeshores - The foreground view in focal areas on popular lakeshores (such as where visitors first arrive at a lake or highly accessible beaches, points, and peninsulas) accommodates day use and protects scenic values. Campsites may occur elsewhere along shorelines. Use is concentrated onto existing sites and social trails. Existing native shoreline vegetation, such as meadows, is intact.

Communication facilities - Permanent repeaters in the pristine WRS zone would not be authorized. Forest Service permanent radio repeaters may be authorized when radio dead zones within the wilderness cannot be serviced by locations outside of wilderness and satellite phones are an ineffective option due to forest cover. This should be considered only after other mitigation efforts have been tried and proved ineffective. Repeaters should be out of sight of trails and destination areas. Communication facilities essential for provisional uses may be co-located with Forest Service repeaters.

Solitude/wildlife habitat effectiveness - Limit use within zones to provide the following levels of encounters and occupied campsites.

Table 19--Solitude standards for Congressionally Designated Wilderness

Indicator	Wilderness Resource Spectrum			
	Transition	Semi-Primitive	Primitive	Pristine
Maximum encounters per day (based on a weighted average during the primary use season— generally defined as when the trail is snow free)	17	10	2	1
Occupied campsites within sight or sound (weighted average)	3	2	1	.5

Fire, unplanned ignitions - Use of unplanned fire ignitions may be authorized. Natural ignitions should be allowed to play their natural ecological role within wilderness. Generally avoid suppressing fires in wilderness.

When suppressing fires from unplanned ignitions cannot be avoided the preferred strategy is manage the fire for wilderness resource benefits. Suppression may be used if wildfires: 1) have a high potential to spread outside national forest boundaries or into areas with extensive recreation developments, or 2) the fire effects would adversely affect the long term recovery of listed species.

Fire, planned ignitions - Planned ignitions may be authorized.

Insects and disease - Ecosystems may be managed to restore natural conditions where adverse changes caused by human-induced disturbances are occurring such as the introduction on non-native insects and diseases. Intervention should occur only where the threat affects the long-term sustainability of the natural structure and function of the ecosystem, and natural processes alone are inadequate to restore the ecosystem. Habitats associated with listed species should be the priority for treatment. Treatments should be designed to be effective while limiting the degree of human manipulation of natural processes.

Invasive weeds - Chemical treatments (as authorized by the Regional Forester) or manual and biological treatments may be authorized to eradicate, reduce, or control populations of invasive plants. Manual control is the preferred method if determined to be effective for the specific situation.

To maintain the wilderness conditions, the Forest is proposing to do the following:

Wilderness management - Within 10 years, accomplish the minimum level of stewardship by completing the following activities: Establish an air quality related value (AQRV) for the Pasayten Wilderness and implement a strategic invasive plant treatment strategy for wilderness with a priority on invasive weeds and newly introduced species. All wilderness trailheads and portal areas with invasive weed infestations would be treated to eradicate, control, contain, or suppress the weed populations. Sites would be managed as part of routine patrols to stabilize or reduce impacts such as excessive site size, erosion, excess fire rings, excess social trails, and to remove structures and stumps. Wilderness character would be restored or sites would be moved towards the desired condition.

WILDERNESS - PRELIMINARY ADMINISTRATIVELY RECOMMENDED

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

By law, all National Forest System lands must be evaluated for possible wilderness recommendation during the plan revision process.

Currently the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF has about 1/3 of its total acreage in designated wilderness. Evaluation showed the Forest offers a well-distributed supply of wilderness and there is a need for adjustments to existing wilderness boundaries. All areas recommended are adjacent to existing wilderness. Wilderness characteristics are protected until Congress either designates the area as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System or releases the area from consideration.

In this management area, a variety of activities may continue to be authorized. Some of the following are those that are of particular interest to the public.

In the plan revision, the following selected activities *could continue to be authorized* in Preliminary Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas:

- Summer off-highway vehicle use (Existing use could continue, but no additional use is allowed).
- Winter motorized use (Existing use could continue, but no additional use is allowed).

Vegetation management activities *would not be authorized* in Preliminary Administratively Recommend Wilderness Areas.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Okanogan-Wenatchee is considering recommending around 125,800 acres in scattered parcels adjacent to existing wilderness areas. Those parcels would be managed as recommended wilderness, where existing uses would continue until Congress took action on the recommendation. Figure 9 shows the proportions of existing wilderness (designated wilderness) to the recommendation (recommended wilderness) and the remaining acres (Rest of Forest) on the Forest.

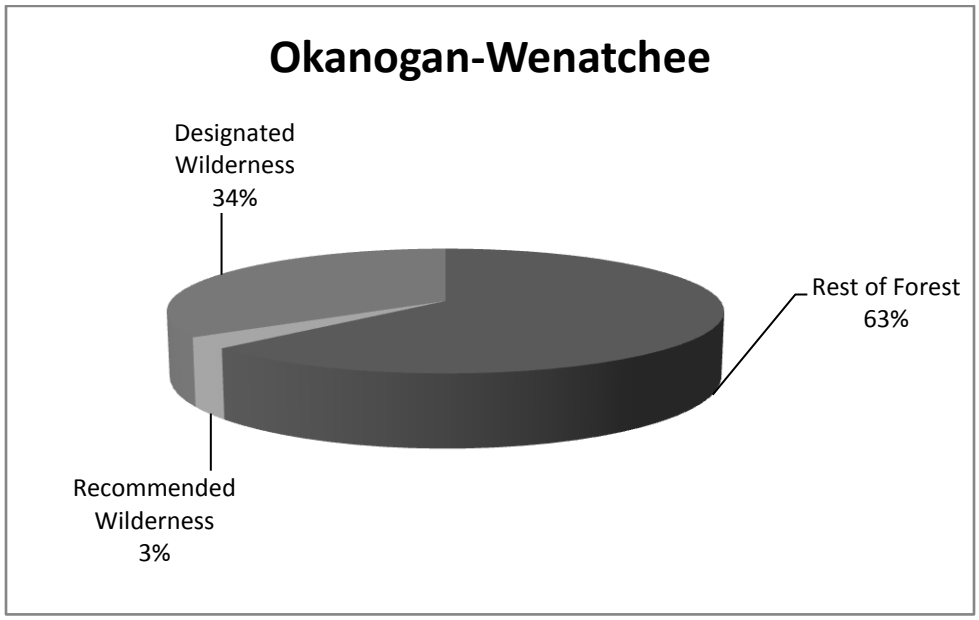
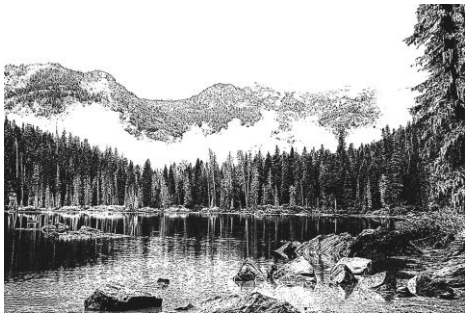


Figure 4. Proportions of existing designated wilderness to recommended wilderness and remaining acres on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Other proposed management direction would include the following:

Uses prior to congressional designation - Prior to congressional designation, uses continue that do not compromise wilderness eligibility. When congressional designation is complete, these areas are managed according to the desired conditions for designated wilderness.



WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Alpine Lakes Wilderness Study Area is the only wilderness study area on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Alpine Lakes Wilderness Study Area contains about 15,129 acres of National Forest System lands. The study area was established by the Interstate 90 Land Exchange Act of 1998. Congress directed the Forest Service to evaluate the area for possible wilderness recommendation and the plan revision process is completing that evaluation.

In this management area, a variety of activities may continue to be authorized. Some of the following are those that are of particular interest to the public.

In the plan revision, the following selected activities *could continue to be authorized* in the Wilderness Study Area.

- Summer off-highway vehicle use (existing use can continue, but no additional use is allowed).
- Winter motorized use (existing use can continue, but no additional use is allowed).

Vegetation management *would not be authorized* in the Wilderness Study Area.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Okanogan-Wenatchee proposes a preliminary wilderness recommendation of some parcels of this study area. That recommendation would include around 12,000 acres of the 15,129-acre study area. Please see the management area map for location of the parcels.

Proposed management direction would include the following.

Uses prior to congressional designation - Prior to congressional designation, uses continue that do not compromise wilderness eligibility. When congressional designation is complete, these areas are managed according to the management direction for Congressionally Designated Wilderness.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This section provides an overview of the proposed approach to monitoring and the required monitoring under the provisions of the 1982 planning rule. As we develop the revised forest plan we plan to include more information on what, beyond the required monitoring, might be included in forest plan monitoring.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, we need to know if the revised forest plan is working as intended. Do the decisions made in the plan need to be changed in response to changing conditions? The monitoring and evaluation strategy is the plan's quality control mechanism to respond to this question. Information is collected and evaluated to ensure that management remains sufficient to sustain a diverse, healthy, and productive forest while serving the public.

The plan will include monitoring questions that assess whether or not:

- Projects are implemented in compliance with forest plan direction;
- Forest, management area, and management prescription standards are followed;
- Plan standards are effective;
- Planning desired conditions and objectives are met;
- Emerging public issues are being addressed;
- Plan implementation is moving towards the desired condition;
- Assumptions, relationships and decisions are valid in light of new information or changing conditions.

Table 20--Minimum required monitoring items from the provisions of the 1982 planning rule

Action, effect or resource to be managed	Monitoring Question
Lands are adequately restocked within five years of regeneration harvest (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(i)) and (36 CFR 219.27 (c)(3))	Have lands been adequately restocked within five years of regeneration harvest?
Determine if lands not suited for timber production have become suited (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(ii))	Have lands that are not suited for timber production become suited?
Maximum opening size from even-aged management and the need for change (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iii)) and (36 CFR 219.27 (d)(2))	What is the maximum size opening from even-aged management? Is there a need to change the standard?
Ensure destructive insects and diseases do not increase to potentially damaging levels following management activities (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iv))	Have destructive insects and diseases increased to potentially damaging levels after management activities?
Population trends of the XX management indicator species in relation to habitat changes (36 CFR 219.19(a)(6))	

Process Information

This section of the document gives you further information on process, on topics that are not under consideration, and key pieces of the current forest plan that remains in place. These are provided for information.

Direction That Remains In Place

While much of the direction in the current forest plans can be carried forward in a revised forest plan, it is worthwhile to note some key pieces of direction that remain in place.

The Adaptive Management Area guidance is carried forward. The management direction for the AMA is contained in the November 18, 1997 Record of Decision for the Snoqualmie Pass Adaptive Management Area.

The direction for the Section 368 Energy Corridors remains in place as decided in the Record of Decision, January 14, 2009, "Designation of Section 368 Energy Corridors on National Forest System Land in 10 Western States. Decision by the Secretary of Agriculture to Amend Land Management Plans Described as the Environmentally Preferred Alternative." This direction applies only to Corridors 102-105 and 244-245 as shown on maps in the January 14, 2009 Record of Decision.

The management direction for survey and manage is contained in the January 2001 Record of Decision For Amendments to Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures, Standards and Guidelines. This is an existing decision that may be modified when more information is available.

Topics Not Addressed in the Revised Forest Plans

The rules guiding the plan revision process give latitude to the Forest Service to determine the scope of topics included in the revision. Criteria for including or not including a topic range from the scope of authority available to the Forest Service to the need for change driven by science, changed economic, social, and ecological conditions; and changes in policy.

It is not within the authority of a forest plan to change treaties, laws, rights and regulations. Revised plans only make decisions that apply to national forest lands. Revised plans will make no decisions regarding management or use of privately owned lands or reserved and outstanding mineral estates.

Earlier plans often paraphrased existing law, regulation, and directives. As a federal land management agency, the Forest Service must follow all applicable laws and regulations. The same

situation applies to executive orders and to agency policy, as expressed in the Forest Service directives. This direction does not need to be restated in the revised plan.

The following list is not inclusive, but it does highlight key topics of interest to the public, making it clear what topics will not be addressed in the revised forest plans.

Wild and Scenic River recommendations

The Forest will not be making recommendations for additions to the Wild and Scenic River System. The plan will carry forward previously identified eligible rivers, determine the eligibility of rivers previously identified in appeal resolution on the current forest plan and those rivers suggested by public input.

The direction in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12, chapter 80) allows the Forest to decide the level of analysis to conduct during plan revision. Studies to determine suitability (whether eligible rivers should actually be recommended for inclusion in the Wild, Scenic and Recreational River System) involve a detailed and expensive process. The Forest has concluded that analysis for eligibility is within the capacity of the plan revision process and to not do additional studies to determine suitability and recommendation of rivers for addition to the Wild and Scenic River System.

Boundaries designated by Congress

It is outside the authority of the Forest to move any boundary established by Congress. Changes to a congressionally designated boundary are not included in this process. Designated Wilderness, Wilderness Study Area, the National Scenic Area (North Cascades Scenic Highway), the corridors for the Pacific Northwest and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails were all designated by Congress.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR Part 294)

The proposed action will include management direction for Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) identified in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR). There is currently a legal dispute regarding the status of the RACR, with two Federal courts having issued conflicting rulings. Pending resolution of that legal question, the proposed action includes plan direction that retains the undeveloped character of the national forest by including management areas that restrict road construction and timber harvest. This is based on analyses completed to date and public involvement. The decision for the final plan will consider further analyses and public comments. The decision for the final plan will be consistent with the legal status of the RACR at the time the plan is signed.

Travel Management (2005 Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use. 36 CFR Part 212, 251, 261, and 295. Amended in 2008).

Due to the high interest in the travel management process happening on the Forest, it is worth explaining that decisions about specific routes and areas for motor vehicle use are not made in this forest plan. These are site-specific decisions considered in the travel management process. The motor vehicle use map (MVUM) created through the travel management process is a site-specific decision. The forest plan revision will not make changes to this map. A forest plan provides over-arching strategic direction that guides travel management processes and decisions.

Solar and wind generated power

National and regional level assessments of potential for solar and wind power show the Forest does not offer a high potential for either energy source, therefore there is no need to develop specific guidance in the plan.

Recreation Residences

Recreation residence permits were recently re-issued. These were site-specific decisions that would not be changed by the plan revision process.

Federal Trust Responsibility and Tribal Rights and Interests

It is not within the authority of a forest plan to change treaties, laws, rights and regulations pertaining to reserved rights and privileges.

American Indian Tribes are sovereign nations. They are government entities with which the Forest Service has established and continues to maintain government-to-government relationships. In government-to-government consultation the Forest Service acknowledges the sovereignty of federally recognized American Indian Tribes, and the special government-to-government relationship between the tribes and the United States through Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000).

Tribes have reserved rights and privileges for their tribal members on any off-site reservation lands ceded through treaties or executive orders to the U.S. Government. The Forest Service manages some of those off-reservation lands ceded through treaties or executive orders. Therefore, the agency has certain legal responsibilities to American Indian Tribes. The Forest Service is required to manage the lands under their stewardship with full consideration of the federal trust responsibility and tribal rights and interests, particularly reserved rights where they exist. In meeting these responsibilities, the agency consults with the tribes whenever proposed policies or management actions may affect their interests.

Future Steps

Developing Alternatives For The Draft EIS

The need for forest plan revision, which identifies the reasons for revising the forest plans, serves as the basis for the initial proposal and development of alternatives to the proposal. The public is invited to participate in developing alternatives and to comment on proposed alternatives.

The comments received on this proposed action will form the basis for alternatives to be included in a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The DEIS will, 1) display and compare alternative ways of managing national forest lands; and 2) outline the physical, biological, social and economic effects of each alternative. Alternatives will include no action, which represents a continuation of current direction contained in the Okanogan and Wenatchee forest plans.

Inviting Public Involvement

Working with others in revising forest plans

- ***The Forest Service will seek public participation*** in the revision effort to the fullest extent practical. This dialogue will include 1) keeping the public informed about the work as it progresses; and 2) listening to and giving consideration to ideas and suggestions offered by the public (both in writing and in person).

- ***This dialogue will occur with all interested and affected parties:*** American Indian tribes; individuals and groups interested in or affected by forest plan revisions; and other federal, state, county and local governments and agencies. The public input we receive will be used throughout the revision process.

- ***To ensure that treaty rights and responsibilities*** to American Indian tribes are honored, the Forest Service will routinely consult with and exchange information with tribes on a government-to-government basis throughout the forest plan revision process.

- ***We will work collaboratively*** with other public land managers. Many forest management issues cross administrative boundaries and must be addressed on a scale larger than a single national forest. However, revised plans will only contain direction for national forest lands.

- ***The Forest Service is committed to and will continue to participate*** in statewide land management planning and coordination efforts. The forest plan revision will be coordinated with equivalent and related planning efforts of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and tribes.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Interested individuals may become informed about and involved in the plan revision process in several ways. These include (but are not necessarily limited to) periodic newsletters, news releases, workshops and open house meetings.

The Forest Service is maintaining a mailing list of the names and addresses of individuals and groups who have expressed an interest in forest plan revision. We will use this list to keep people informed about the status of the revision effort, as well as about upcoming public involvement activities.

To be included on this list, call or write:

Forest Plan Revision
Okanogan Valley Office
1240 Second Avenue South
Okanogan, WA 98840
Phone: (509) 826-3275

Although the Forest Service will continue working with tribal governments, individuals, groups, landowners and other government agencies throughout the entire planning process, we will be formally inviting public participation and comment at two specific stages in the revision process:

Phase 1: Proposed Action / Notice of Intent (NOI)
At the time of the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register and release of the proposed action, , we invite individuals to comment on the proposal, and to share concerns or raise issues related to this initial proposal.

In June / July / August 2011, we will host a series of open house meetings to 1) present and clarify proposed changes to the forest plans; and 2) explain how people can respond to the proposed action and Notice of Intent.

To be most useful, comments on the proposed action and Notice of Intent should be submitted in writing and ***be received by August 29, 2011***. Mail comments to:

Forest Plan Revision
Okanogan Valley Office
1240 Second Avenue South
Okanogan, WA 98840

Email address – r6_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us

Website address – www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/forest-plan

Phase 2: Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plans

The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) will display and compare alternative ways of managing the national forest. The alternatives are based on issues raised in comments on the proposed action. The DEIS will also describe the physical, biological, social and economic effects of each alternative. The Forest Service will identify a preferred alternative, indicating the alternative the Forest Service feels provides the most appropriate management direction for the forest.

The DEIS is expected to be published June of 2012. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 90 days from the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.

CONCLUSION TO THE REVISION PROCESS

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND FINAL REVISED FOREST PLANS

After the end of the comment period on the draft environmental impact statement, the Forest Service will review, consider, analyze and respond to public comments in preparing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and revised forest plan. These documents are scheduled to be completed in 2013.

The responsible official will consider the comments, responses and environmental consequences discussed in the final environmental impact statement, together with applicable laws, regulations and policies, in making a decision and adopting a final revised forest plan. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to objection in accordance with federal regulations *(36 CFR 217)*.

These revised forest plans will set the management direction for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest for the next 10-15 years.

The responsible official is the Regional Forester.